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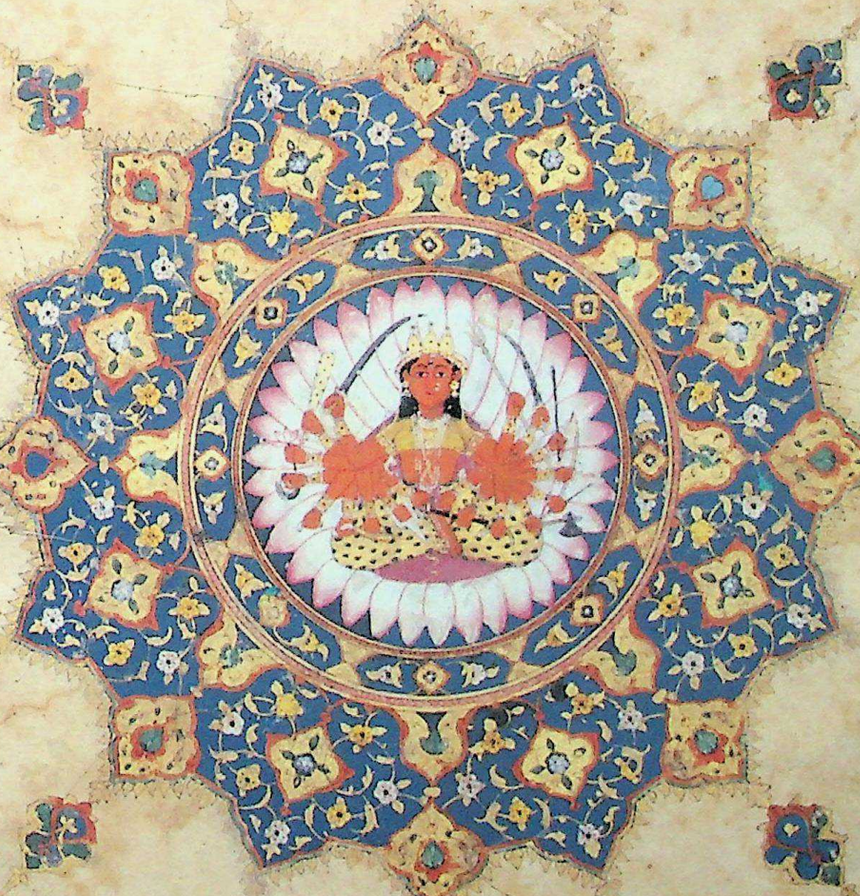
Kashmiri Painting



Karuna Goswamy

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This is a pioneering study.

Kashmiri paintings are to be found in impressively large numbers in public and private collections, and yet remarkably little has been written on them. As the author says in her Introduction to the present work: "A little like the thousand-petalled lotus of Indian myth, the art of Kashmir, especially its manuscript painting, has been more believed in than explored. The extent to which its roots extend, the sources from which it drew its nourishment, the direction of its growth across time, its texture, even the full, colourful range of its expanse, are but poorly known."

In this exciting, richly illustrated work, then, Dr. Goswamy sets out not only to fill a serious gap in our information on painting by examining a wide range of manuscripts and folios lying in collections all over the world: she also analyses them with great care, sensitizing the reader to their many qualities.

But this is also a timely study, a reminder, in these strife-torn days of Kashmir, of a better, more harmonious past. For in the painting of Kashmir, there is a unique fusion: so many artistic and historical strands come together, from the Buddhist wall-paintings of Alchi to the Islamic manuscripts of Iran on the one hand and the 'Hindu' work of the Pahari states on the other. Here, the work of the Kashmiri painters is viewed consistently against the background of the society which threw it up, and the issues related to assimilation and diffusion, production and patronage.

1998 pp. xviii+180 *Size 30cm x 22cm*
Figures 41 *Col. Plates 90*
ISBN-81-7305-160-7 *Rs. 1800*

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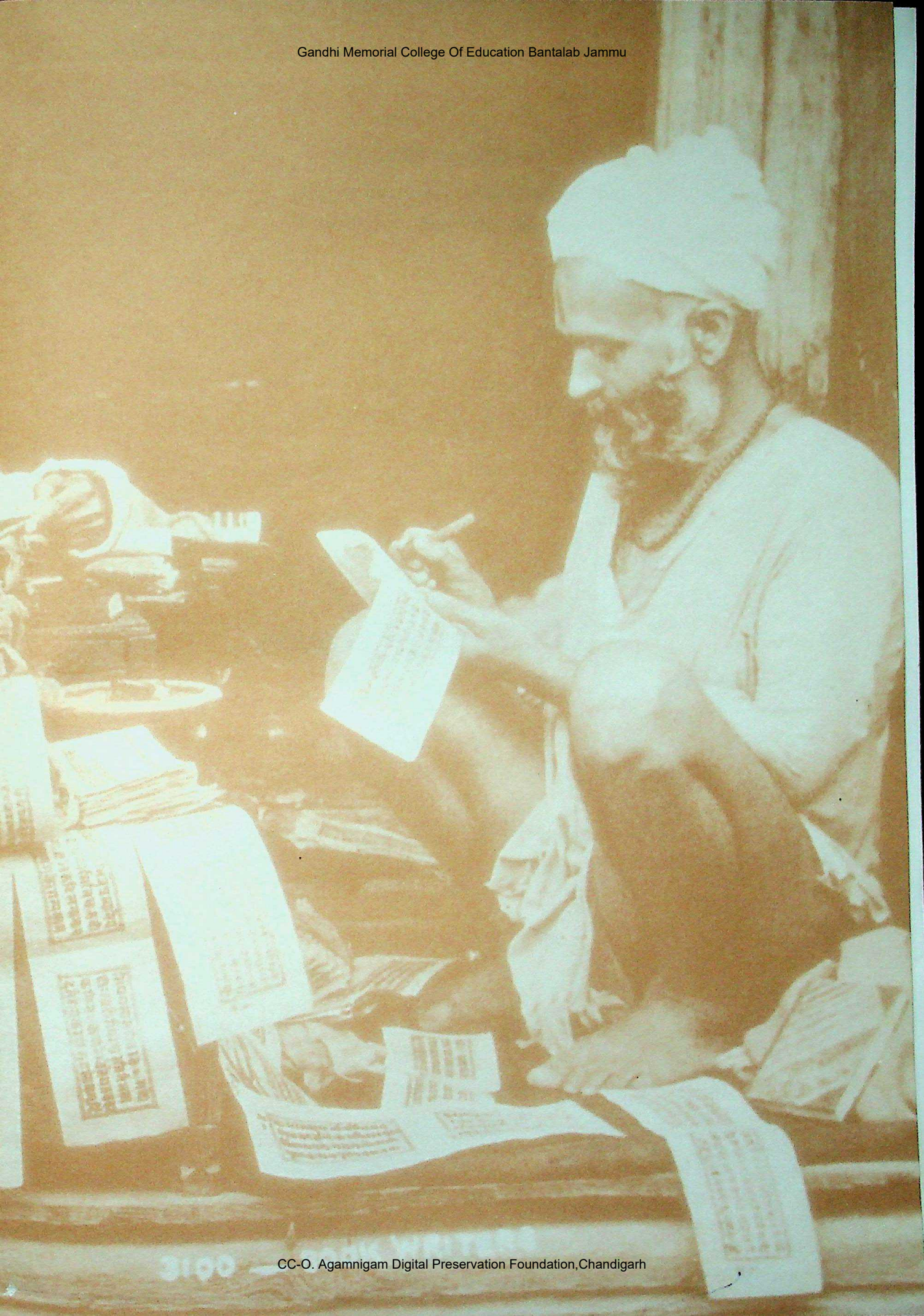

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Kashmiri Painting

Assimilation and Diffusion; Production and Patronage

KARUNA GOSWAMY

Reference Book

G.M. College of Education
Raipur, Bantalab
Jammu.
Acc. No. 5077 22(III)
Dated 16.5.03

G.M.C.E.J
5077

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
SHIMLA

ARYAN BOOKS INTERNATIONAL
NEW DELHI

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ISBN 81-7305-160-7

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First Published 1998

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Published by

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla-171005

in association with

ARYAN BOOKS INTERNATIONAL
Pooja Aptts., 4B, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj
New Delhi-110002

Printed in India at Print Perfect, New Delhi.

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Preface

Unlikely as it may seem, this is the first full-length study of Kashmir manuscript paintings ever to appear. This is not to suggest that no notice of painting in Kashmir has been taken till now: but earlier work has tended to be fragmentary, focussing either on a single collection, or on one strand of painting, sometimes simply on a lone document. This study sets out on the other hand to present a comprehensive view of what constituted painting in Kashmir from the 17th to the 19th centuries, and to reconstruct the social, economic and stylistic context of that work. In many ways, then, it needs to be seen as a pioneering work: exciting, like much pioneering work is, and capable of opening up further areas of inquiry while raising issues of significance, but also aware of its own limits.

The painters of Kashmir turned out prodigious quantities of work, and it is difficult to think of any major collection of Indian art, in India and abroad, in which some Kashmiri paintings or the other do not figure. Quite obviously, therefore, it is not possible to catalogue all that work: only a selection of manuscripts and paintings could be included. But the selection has been made with much care, the aim being on the one hand to point to the range of the Kashmiri painter's work and, on the other, to establish the parameters of the style which is often perceived as mercurial and elusive.

The many strengths of the Kashmiri painter's work have gone virtually unnoticed till now while its obvious weaknesses have been over-emphasized. This study will, it is hoped, enable scholars and other readers to form their own judgements. It is certain that a maturer view needs to be taken of the work as a whole. When that is done, Kashmiri painting will undoubtedly enter the mainstream of studies in the art of India.

The materials that have gone into this book have taken long years to collect and analyse, but the study could be brought to completion only when I was kindly given leave by the Panjab University to accept a two-year Fellowship at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. My debts are thus many, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them. Professor J.S. Grewal, during whose tenure I completed my work, gave to this study his sustained support, for which I am grateful. Professor Mrinal Miri, the present Director, has been truly generous and considerate, and seen the publication of this study through many difficulties, something that puts me in his debt. I was fortunate also in receiving help in so many meaningful ways from other colleagues, academic and administrative, at the Institute, especially from Mr. N.K. Maini, Mr. Ashok Sharma, Mr. S.A. Jabbar, Mrs. Alekha Jabbar, Mr. T.K. Majumdar, Mr. V.C. Jauhari, Dr. S.K. Goyal, Mr. Bhanu Pratap, Mr. L.K. Das, and Mr. A. Rahman. The line drawings that are used as illustrations in the present work owe themselves to Mr. Vijay Sharma, the well-known painter from Chamba, who brought his usual sensitivity to the task in hand.

I was kindly given access to so many collections, public and private, for which I am most thankful. I would especially like to acknowledge the help in this respect of Dr. R.C. Sharma, Dr. S.S. Biswas, Dr. Daljeet Khare, Dr. Naseem Akhtar, Dr. Khanna and Mr. Shah of the National Museum, New Delhi; Mr. V.N. Singh, Mrs. Suwarcha Paul, Mrs. Poonam Khanna and Mr. S. Dhami of the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh; Pt. Sthanu Dutt and Shri Pinakpani of the Kurukshetra University Library, Kurukshetra; Dr. V.C. Ohri, Mr. S.M. Sethi, and Mr. Chauhan of the Himachal Pradesh State Museum, Shimla; Dr. S. Gorakshakar and Dr. Kalpana Desai of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; Mrs. Sumedha Kataria and Dr. A. Sinha of the Sri Krishna Museum, Kurukshetra; Miss A.K. Anand and Miss Sharda Anand of the Panjab University Library, Chandigarh; the

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Honorary Director of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta; Dr. P.N. Pushp of the Research Department of the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir, and Dr. J.L. Bhan of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar; the Librarian of the Raghunath Temple Library, Jammu, Dr. R.C. Sharma and Ms. Sarla Chopra of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi; Dr. Walter Boehning of the von Portheim Stiftung, Heidelberg; Dr. Ron Otsuka and Ms. Julia White of the Denver Art Museum, Denver; Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Frau Andrea Kuprecht, Frau B. Kammerer and Frau Wettstein of the Museum Rietberg, Zurich; Ms. Dubrinka Dantcheva of the Cyril and Methodius Foundation for International Art, Sofia; Dr. Alice Boner and Dr. Georgette Boner, Zurich; Frau Susanne Scheitlin, Kilchberg; Herr Balthazar Reinhart and Frau Nanni Reinhart, Winterthur; M. Enrico Isacco, Paris; Dr. Usha Bhatia, Bombay; and Mr. B.M. Aggarwal, New Delhi. To my colleagues, Professor Indu Banga, Dr. Kiran Pawar and Dr. Chetan Singh I owe many thanks for help and much stimulation of mind. Mr. Thakur of the Panjab University Library, Chandigarh spared for me much time in preparing the index; my students, Rupinder Grewal, Happy, Ramnik Sandhu and Seema Toor lent their help at various stages of this work; Mr. Gulshan, Mr. Gopi and Mr. Naveen of Gulshan Graphics were very patient and helpful in sorting out the reprographic problems I carried to them.

To my family's warmth and support, I owe more than I can record. On countless occasions I took my questions to my husband, Professor B.N. Goswamy, who almost always had the answers, and gave me most generously of his time; the support of other members of the family – especially Mrs. Kaushalya Goswamy, Prem, Malavika and Arvind – saw me through demanding and difficult times. Those two close friends from Zurich, Eberhard and Barbara Fischer, were as always thoughtful and supportive. I am aware of this, and am deeply grateful.

If the two years of my Fellowship tenure at the Institute in Shimla were most pleasant, it was due to the friendliness of so many members of the staff, among them Shri Bhrishtu Ram, Shri Kundan Lal, Shri Hardev Singh, Shri Kaka Singh, Shri Chaman Lal, Shri Moti Ram, Shri Barfia Ram and Sarvshri Kesar Singh, Lal Chand, Devraj, Emmanuel and Chander. It gives me much pleasure to be able to acknowledge this now.

K.G.

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Kashmiri scribes at work

Photograph, 1890's.

[Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library]

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Introduction

A little like the thousand-petalled lotus of Indian myth, the art of Kashmir, especially its manuscript painting, has been more believed in than explored. The extent to which its roots extend, the sources from which it drew its nourishment, the direction of its growth across time, its texture, even the full, colourful range of its expanse, are but poorly known. This may not be true of the earliest phase of Kashmir – there have been impressive studies of its archaeological remains and, lately, of its bronzes, as also of the murals of Alchi – but only the most cursory of attentions has gone to its many phases after the twelfth century. Even in respect of its wonderful crafts, known all over the world and justly celebrated, only shawl-making has been studied in any depth: the carpets of Kashmir, its boat-building, its papier-mache work, its wood crafts, silver-work, silks, have not received the same measure of scholarly treatment. A lot remains to be done.

Of the illustrated manuscripts of Kashmir – which are taken in the present study as the context in which issues of assimilation and diffusion are sought to be examined –, of all its arts of the book in fact, a vague awareness has hovered for some time on the fringes of many minds: the sheer numbers in which these manuscripts still exist have succeeded in forcing themselves upon the attention of researchers. But interest in the work of the Kashmiri painters has generally been both partial and perfunctory. Notices of it are very often mixed with some scorn: descriptions like 'clever', 'repetitive', 'well-rehearsed' are frequently pressed into service. Nearly all work firmly identified as Kashmiri has been seen as 'provincial' or 'folkish' in character, deriving essentially from Persian originals or from late, hybrid Mughal work. One notices this in whatever writing has been devoted to Kashmiri illustrated manuscripts by Percy Brown, Goetz, Stchoukine, Mallmann, among others. The only monograph so far written on Kashmiri painting, by Adamova and Greck, focusses itself exclusively upon illustrated manuscripts of Persian texts, as if nothing else were ever done by Kashmiri painters. Linda Leach's notice on Kashmiri painting in the Shah Jahan period raises some thoughtful issues, but does not really step outside of the Persian-Mughal ambit. Losty alone – an early reference by Novotny apart – discusses the work of the Kashmiri painters as seen in illuminated and illustrated texts in general, picking some examples from non-Persian works. The scope of his writing on Kashmir, however, for all its sensitivity, remains limited, the actual work being concerned essentially with a much larger canvas.

A considerable part of the work of the Kashmiri painter – i.e. that seen in non-Persian works, in texts that treat exclusively of Hindu themes but draw visually upon a diversity of sources, illuminated and illustrated works with religious themes – has not even received preliminary notice. To all intents and purposes, illuminated and illustrated manuscripts from Kashmir are simply taken to be late works that lean heavily upon Persian models; and are in fact provincial, folkish versions of these Persian models. This does little justice to the total *oeuvre* of the Kashmiri painters. For not only is the range of their works considerably broader than this: this view inhibits any discussion of the many issues that the phenomenon called Kashmiri painting raises. These issues, involving the processes of assimilation and diffusion, among others, go well beyond being merely interesting. They are significant to our very understanding of the way some things operated in India in the past. Besides, this view leaves out of account the finest work done in Kashmir. That work needs to be seen not simply as a historical document which it is: it is also visually stimulating, and enhancing.

The present study does not draw upon all the extant material on Kashmiri painting from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Considering its wide

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spread and its sheer volume, such a task would be truly daunting. But a close acquaintance with what constitutes Kashmiri work, using a large number of representative and significant examples, yields much, making the task considerably easier. Even this restricted range of materials makes it possible to see how the work of the Kashmiri painter challenges several well-established ideas.

There is, thus, the whole issue of patronage in Indian art on which this material has a bearing. One has grown accustomed to regarding virtually all art in India as being produced within the context of given patronage, most often at the royal or sub-royal level, at times at the level of monastic or religious establishments, and the like. Major work at the Mughal court, in the Rajasthani or Pahari tradition, or in the Deccan, for example, is naturally attributed to retained artists who were bound in an enduring if not perpetual relationship with their patrons, receiving land-grants, rations, rewards in cash or kind, from them. Some variations within this broad system are known, and subtleties of aspect in relationships between patron and artist can be envisaged, but this is the pattern that is believed generally to have prevailed. In this respect, Kashmiri painting is significantly different. There is not one Kashmiri illustrated manuscript that can be securely associated with royalty, not one colophon that yields any information on the role of princely patronage of this art. It is true that one speaks of this matter without the advantage of knowing works that may have belonged to the library of the Sultans of Kashmir, said to have been destroyed by fire. But this notwithstanding, one would have legitimately expected at least *some* royal manuscripts to have survived – if they were commissioned at all – in some other collections, having been given in gift or exchange, as was the case elsewhere. But nothing with any royal association has come our way: all that has survived is an impressively long string of manuscripts of varying qualities that seem to have been commissioned by or executed for what would be called persons of the middle or 'ordinary' classes. Enough colophons giving the names of patrons for whom such works were scripted and illustrated are in existence, justifying taking the view that Kashmiri painting seems essentially to have been activity engaged in for, or patronized by, a bourgeois clientele.

In quality, Kashmiri painting ranges from the very sumptuous to the very cursory, *bazaar*-like work. Patronage however seems to come almost exclusively from this broad group, whether resident in Kashmir or in other parts of northern India. In this respect – and this respect alone – the one parallel to Kashmiri painting that comes to mind is Jaina work with its extraordinarily rich and long tradition of illustrated and illuminated manuscripts. The context of Jaina painting of Western India is evidently different: the subject matter is almost exclusively religious: and there is strong inherent conservatism in the style. But pursuant to the Jaina practice of having manuscripts copied and dedicated or donated as an act of merit to *bhandars*, the patronage of Jaina painting seems to have come, again, from the mercantile or the priestly class, with barely any names of royal patrons figuring in Jaina colophons. There is no likelihood of the older Jaina tradition having directly influenced the Kashmir pattern of production and patronage in this respect, but the middle-class support and patronage of art binds the two phenomena in a curious way.

Kashmiri painting forces us also to raise questions, and think afresh, about the standard Indian model of painting essentially being confined to artists, or families of artists, located at one place and turning out work essentially for 'local' or 'regional' consumption. One thinks of retained artists attached to courts or sub-royal patrons working essentially within a restricted spatial orbit: Rajasthani artists working for Rajasthani patrons; Pahari artists working for Pahari courts; Mughal artists drawn initially from different parts of India, but working within the Imperial ambit; and so on. The extent to which one takes this model for granted is apparent from the fact that one is startled – because one is so unprepared for it

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– when a Pahari series show up at a Rajasthani centre, or a Rajasthani series in a Mughal collection. Exchanges of art works are not unknown; it is also now well established that artists moved sometimes from one court to another. With all this, however, the cases of works in one broad style turning up in a collection or an area not usually associated with it are still rather rare; and the physical area within which artists moved from one court or *thikana* to another, is still rather limited. In contrast to this, the spatial extent over which Kashmiri painting seems to have spread is very considerable. From the valley itself, naturally, a large number of manuscripts in the recognizable Kashmiri style have turned up; but what comes as a great surprise is the discovery of Kashmiri style works, 'locally' executed, in areas as far apart, or at as much of a distance from Kashmir, as Afghanistan, the Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and as far east as Bengal.

No clear documentation is available but one suspects that the extent of this stylistic area may have even been wider than this. In any case, the spread is truly impressive, and what explains it is the very unusual phenomenon of itinerent painter-groups from Kashmir that regularly went out of the valley and took up 'casual' commissions. These painters moved about the countryside as professionals engaged solely in the production of manuscripts, scripted, illustrated and illuminated on the spot, for such patrons as would commission them. Evidence to this effect is presented in Chapter IV. Here, what is of interest is to point out the existence of a pattern, a model, that runs counter to one's notions of artists being confined to small local or regional areas, defining the style of that locality by their production inside its rough confines. This model of artists on the move – professionally itinerent, at least far more mobile than hitherto believed – could conceivably provide a new perspective from which to understand how things worked. Evidently much work needs to be done to follow this line, to track the existence of this paradigm as it obtained elswhere, as also in the other arts of India. The thoughts that Kashmiri painting raises in this respect are doubtless strong and insistent.

One is struck by other thoughts as one explores Kashmiri painting: how for instance, a style, as it gets formed over a period of time, can draw upon visual ideas and iconographies that stretch far back into the past and seem to have survived somehow, by being deeply embedded, perhaps dormant, in the awareness of a people. Thus, Kashmiri manuscript painting, as it is treated of here – a phenomenon of the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century – seems initially to incline noticeably towards Persian models, as would be evident from any general consideration of a range of manuscripts; traces of some late Mughal elements are also found in it. But, as it develops, one suddenly sees the painters drawing upon conventions and iconographies that go back to the 'Buddhist' period of Kashmir history, to work like the great murals at Alchi for example: things that one would ordinarily have taken to be all but forgotten and dead. There is a sudden surfacing: of this there can be little doubt, for the stylistic evidence is very strong. The channels through which this sap rose up and energised the artistic endeavour in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, adding a new flavour to the stylistic complex, are not easy to determine. As has been speculated in the following pages, perhaps the early style had survived in a modified form in folkish, ritual paintings that went on being done silently over a long period of time. The sudden emergence of the style may have been in response to, or at least have coincided with, the new needs occasioned by new subject matter. But the phenomenon is clearly there, the Kashmir genius for adaptation and innovation coming once again into full play at this time.

Kashmiri painting is not easy to categorize. It is clearly not court painting, elitist, or exclusive: the class from which its patronage came and to whose needs it addressed itself, helps to establish this fact quite clearly. The families engaged in Kashmiri painting may not have been very numerous, but they seem to have been close to the people in the midst of whom they lived and for whom they

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produced their work. Their work however cannot be designated as 'Folk', if by folk art is understood "the art of the people, as distinguished from the sophisticated product that constitutes the mainstream of art". Or an "art created among groups that exist within a framework of developed society but, for geographical or cultural reasons, are largely separated from the sophisticated artistic developments of their time and that produced distinct styles and objects for local needs and tastes". The work of Kashmiri painters may have been for a "particular public", in Malraux's phrase, "to which it addressed itself"; it may also fulfil some other criteria of folk art that have emerged from recent discussions on it, like 'the lack of the notion of space', the absence of 'essential and realistic faithfulness to nature', or the possession of 'lyric synthesis', and 'exaggeration for expressive reasons'. But in so many other respects does Kashmiri painting stay clear of the label of 'Folk' or 'Popular' art - its sophistication, its closeness to and sharp awareness of literature, its ambition to approximate 'High' art, its self-aware quality, the possibility of studying it "apart from the environment in which it existed". At the same time it was obviously an art that was understood by the people for whom it was created, who in fact sustained it; this makes it different from the elitist, sometimes rarefied, art that flourishes within courtly circles acutely aware of a 'style'. Perhaps it is best designated as 'Accessible Art', easily approached, sophisticated in its own way but not remote, comforting in the range of the conventions it employed and familiar in the sources upon which it freely drew.

What is treated of in the present study is essentially a compact, identifiable but little-known phase of Kashmiri art, and the issues it raises. Much is excluded from it: the Manichaean inputs of the early centuries of the Christian era; the kind of art that Rinchen-bzangpo and his distinguished contemporaries knew; the artistic strain that Kashmiri artists took with them to the Mughal court of Akbar; and the like. But the period treated is well-defined, and it is rich enough to offer an area of study that enhances our awareness of a significant chapter of Indian art while providing fresh insights into the ways things happened in this field in the past.

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Chapter One

THE SETTING

> *[Such is Kashmir], the country which may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit, but not by armed force; where the inhabitants in consequence fear more the next world [than this one]; where there are hot baths in winter, comfortable descents towards the river banks; where the rivers being free from dangerous aquatic animals are without parallel; where, realising that the land created by his father is unable to bear heat, the hot-rayed sun honours it by burning with softness even in summer. Learning, high dwelling houses, saffron, iced water, grapes and the like: – things that even in heaven are difficult to find are common here.*[1]

Kalhana's justly enthusiastic description of Kashmir (I: 39-42) as some kind of a paradise is echoed again and again in the writings of later chroniclers and visitors to the valley. "*Kashmir, khitta-i-jannat-nazir*" ["Kashmir, the land that is the equal of paradise"] has become so much of a cliche and the phrase is so often come upon in colophons of Kashmiri manuscripts ["*dar Kashmir, khitta-i-jannat nazir, tahrir yafi*"], that one almost stops paying attention to it. And yet, the land continues to be what it was: almost without a parallel in respect of the beauty alike of its valley and of the awesome mountainous landscape that it encompasses across its tremendous expanse.[2]

Kashmir has always been seen as a very large tract of territory. As Pandit Anand Koul, writing in the early part of this century, recorded.[3] 'It is the largest State in India, larger than the Nizam's territory, thrice as large as Mysore, twice as much as Gwalior and Bikanir put together, five times the size of Jaipur, ten times the area of Baroda, and a dozen times as much as Travancore. It is again over 4/5th of the Punjab and about 3/4th of the United Provinces. Excluding Ireland, the British Islands are only a little larger in extent than Kashmir." This enormous tract of land has, in the eyes of modern observers and, in modified ways, even of past writers, been regarded as consisting of four major divisions: Jammu; Kashmir; Ladakh; and Gilgit. The boundaries on the east are formed by what is known as "Chinese Tibet"; on the north by Yarkand and the Pamirs; on the west by the Yagistan; and on the south by the Punjab. The Kashmir and Jammu part of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, in its provincial series, puts the physical aspect of Kashmir rather well.[4]

> It may be likened to a house with many storeys. The door is at Jammu, and the house faces south looking out on the Punjab districts of Jhelum, Gujrat, Sialkot, and Gurdaspur. There is just a fringe of level land along the Panjab frontier, bordered by a plinth of low hilly country, sparsely wooden, broken, and irregular. This is known as the *Kandi*, the home of the Chibs and the Dogras. Then comes the first storey, to reach which a range of mountains, 8000 feet high, must be climbed. This is a temperate country with forests of oak, rhododendron, and chestnut, and higher up of *deodar* and pine, a country of beautiful uplands, such as Bhadarwah and Kishtwar, drained by the deep gorge of the Chenab river. The steps of the Himalayan range known as the Pir Panjal lead to the second storey, on which rests the exquisite valley of Kashmir, drained by the Jhelum river. Up steeper flights of the Himalayas we pass to Astor and Baltistan on the north and to Ladakh on the east, a tract drained by the river Indus. In the back premises, far away to the north-west, lies Gilgit, west and north of the Indus, the whole

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> area shadowed by a wall of giant mountains which run east from the Kilik or Mintak passes of the Hindu Kush, leading to the Pamirs and the Chinese dominions... Westward of the northern angle above Hunza-Nagar the mighty maze of mountains and glaciers tends a little south of east along the Hindu Kush range bordering Chitral, and so on into the limits of Kafiristan and Afghan territory. At the Karakoram pass (18,37o feet) the wall zigzags, and to the north-east of the state is dotted about. Little is known of that bastion; and the high corner bastion of moutain plains at an elevation of over 17,000 ft. with salt lakes. The administration of Jammu and Kashmir has but scanty information about the eastern wall of the property, which is formed of mountains of an elevation of about 20,000 feet, and crosses lakes, like Pangkong, lying at a height of nearly 14,000 feet. The southern boundary repeats the same features – grand mountains running to peaks of over 20,000 feet; but farther west, where the wall dips down more rapidly to the south, the elevation is easier, and we come to Bhadarwah and to the still easier heights of Basohli on the Ravi river.[5]

The heart of Kashmir, for most people, lies in its valley; and it is this which is of the greatest interest from the standpoint of the present study. The large tract south of the Pir Panjal, consisting primarily of the group of Rajput states dominated for a long time by Jammu, is linked from the point of view of art, not so much to Kashmir, as to the so-called Hill States, on either side of the Ravi, among which grew up the main schools of Pahari painting: with centres at Basohli, Mankot, Bandralta, Jasrota, among others, to the west of the Ravi; and Kangra, Guler, Nurpur, Chamba, Mandi, Kulu, Bilaspur among others to the east of that river.[6] But for the fact that it was a scion of the Jamwal Rajput family of Jammu, Gulab Singh, who ultimately established control in mid-nineteenth century not only over the Jammu group of states but over all of Kashmir, from our point of view Jammu is really of marginal interest. Likewise, the difficult and unnegotiable area of Gilgit, and the country around it, barely enters the awareness of the art historian. But for some archaeological finds, some monumental rock-cut sculptures of an early date, some manuscripts, two of them with painted book-covers, some early bronzes, Gilgit does not really belong to the history of the art of Kashmir, at least in respect of its painting.[7] Ladakh, mysterious in its own ways, an extraordinary meeting place of cultures, demands greater attention than either Jammu or Gilgit, for it clearly contributes one strain to the art of Kashmir, in respect both of its painting and sculpture; but interest in its painting ceases after the period of its brilliant murals of the eleventh century which are now the subject of intensive, exciting study by art historians.[8]

This leaves the valley of Kashmir: rich, fertile, extraordinarily beautiful, and in many ways the region through which the mainstream of Kashmiri culture and art can be seen as flowing. The geography of the valley, in many ways, helped shape its art and history. Large and extended and very easy to move about in once one is there, it is, however, spoken of by countless writers as 'difficult of access'. When Alberuni wrote his eleventh century account of Kashmir, he emphasised, much like the Chinese records earlier, the Kashmir system of guarding all frontier passes.[9] "They (the Kashmiris) are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country, and therefore take always much care to keep a stronghold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people."

One may not take Alberuni quite literally on this count, but there is some truth to his words and Hermann Goetz's description of Kashmir in general as being 'both a highway and a refuge' sums the situation up rather neatly. While the

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mountainous territory did offer refuge, a sense of being isolated from the rest of the land of India, it also occupied a position in geography where it turned into a bustling centre of trade, a considerable number of trade routes passing through the land, placing Kashmir virtually at the centre of movement from one end of Asia to the other. The space relations of Kashmir offer a fascinating study, something to which many writers have drawn attention repeatedly. It is spoken of by a group of geographers today as[10] "a half-closed eco-system, opening up slowly in space and across time." Again; "The sons of the soil have come to terms with the natural elements of the system, through millennia of settled life by sticking to the valley floor and developing the technology of the kulh-based paddy monoculture, symbiotically linked with handicrafts activity, concentrated in the winter months when the seeds slumber under the snows... the favourable temperature regimes of the growing seasons have not only given to the valley a unifying homogeneity and a socio-economic viability at a low level of technology, but have also infused into the system an internal strength and vitality which is the basis of the historical continuity of the Kashmiri tradition, which has contributed no less to the inward looking characteristics of its ethos."[11]

The valley is seen as being located in a region where "East, Central, West and South Asia meet and has been consequently in contact of varying degrees with four major geo-political elements: (1) The Indo-Gangetic plain with the geo-strategic node of Delhi; (2) The land of the Pathans and the Afghans and through it with the extensive realm of West Asia; (3) Central Asia all along the arc stretching from Balkh and Badakhshan in the West through Dushambe, Samarqand and Bokhara to Kashghar, Yarkand and Khotan in the east; and (4) Tibet, and through it with China."[12]

Traditionally, the region has been seen as a meeting point of three empires: the Chinese, the Indian, and the West Asian. But, as has been pointed out, in Kashmir also met three other Empires, those of the spirit of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism; and those of the three linguistic realms, of Indo-European, Dardic and Tibeto-Mongol extraction..[13]

All accounts of early, medieval and pre-modern Kashmir emphasise the extraordinary spectacle of the quantum of trade passing through the land of Kashmir.[14] Long lists of articles of import and export into and from Kashmir can be tabulated from these accounts, everything pointing towards the geographically and the geo-politically unique situation of Kashmir. When one adds to this the firmly established fact that Kashmir was always seen as a centre of great learning,[15] the interest in the region increases still further. Buddhism which flourished here for long centuries and continues in the regions of Ladakh till today, supplied a major point of contact, Tibet and China being thus especially closely related. From this movement into Kashmir came pilgrims and travellers like Hieun-Tsang;[16] from Kashmir were taken out great stores of books and artisans as recorded in the life of the 'Great Translator' Rinchen-bzangpo;[17] from Kashmir also went out teachers and priests and men of learning, and administrators like the Bakshis who were active in Central Asia in the fourteenth century.[18] Of classical learning, Kashmir was always a major centre and an impressive list of names of thinkers, philosophers, writers, poets and of course historians or chroniclers is associated with Kashmir.[19] Kalhana, the twelveth century author of the *Rajatarangini* which is a chronicle without parallel in the annals of India, and his successors like Jonaraja, who carried his work further, stand in a category apart. But there are numerous other names, which historians of Kashmir do not tire of writing about. To Kashmir belonged some of the most distinguished names known to early India. Thus, Charaka the great physician; Varahamihira, the astronomer; Abhinavagupta, the philosopher and aesthetician; men of letters like Bilhana, Kshemendra, Lollata, Damodaragupta. It is in Kashmir again that one of the most important *shilpa* texts of early India, the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* is believed to have been written. Some of the most

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abstruse and subtle aspects of the philosophy of Shaivism were worked out here. Great teachers like Shankaracharya and Ramanuja are known to have travelled to Kashmir. All over India, Kashmiri pandits, men of learning and of piety, are recorded as being active at royal courts. Apart from Benaras, in northern India, it was Kashmir that was looked upon by people in general as a place of great learning and prestigious scholarship. The recorded tradition[20] regarding the training of young acolytes in Benares in this context is of undoubted interest: there, after the completion of their studies, the acolytes were made to go through the ritual of taking a few steps while facing the direction in which Kashmir lay, symbolic of the road that they must travel to complete their learning. All of this can only have resulted in Kashmir becoming, as Goetz put it, a 'highway of sects'.[21] Here, there were movements of ideas, a merging of traditions of different kinds.

The lure of learning apart, the beauty of Kashmir drew people to it from far and wide. From the Mughal times onwards we have long and impassioned accounts of what greeted the visitors to the valley. As Abul Fazl wrote in his account of the 'Sarkar of Kashmir':[22] "the country is enchanting, and might be fittingly called a garden of perpetual spring, surrounding a citadel terraced to the skies, and deservedly appropriate to be either the delight of the worldly or the retired abode of the recluse. Its streams are sweet to the taste, its waterfalls music to the ears, and its climate is invigorating. The rain and snowfall are similar to that of Turkestan and Persia and its periodical rains occur at the same season as in Hindustan. The lands are artificially watered and are not dependent on rain for irrigation. The flowers are enchanting and fill the heart with delight. Violets, the red rose and wild narcissus cover the plains. To enumerate its flora would be impossible.... tulips are grown on the roofs which present a lovely sight in the springtime." He then goes into a long and enthusiastic description of the products of Kashmir.

Abul Fazl's account is only a precursor of what follows in many a Mughal hand, including that of the Emperor Jahangir, who was passionately fond of Kashmir, and who journeyed to it several times, taking his painters to record the beauty of its flowers,[23] founding great gardens, beautifying the place, much like his own father, Akbar, had done in founding several architectural complexes. To Kashmir apparently were attracted men of different persuasion, among them certainly artists like Muhammad Nadir of Samarqand,[24] who completed some of his work here, and many groups of distinguished men, thinkers, poets, writers and painters who constituted the company of gifted men around the Mughal governor, Zafar Khan, in the times of Shah Jahan.[25] Much, in other words, had contributed to making Kashmir what it has been for a long time: a centre not only of learning in the past, but of distinguished work in the present, in the area of arts and crafts, especially the latter, for which it has for centuries enjoyed great reputation. When Kalhana paid homage to 'the indescribable insight of a gifted artist which excels the stream of ambrosia, since through it is achieved a permanent embodiment of glory by the artists and others as well',[26] he was speaking from his experience of the artists, men that he knew perhaps of his own times, or had heard of. It would seem that each generation produced here men who established standards, or lived by them.

Much like its geography, the history of Kashmir helps establish the context in which its arts developed and flourished, and needs very briefly to be looked at.[27] For the early history of the land, there is that incomparable record, the *Rajatarangini* which, despite the almost obligatory poetic flourishes that Kalhana brings in his *kavya* style of writing, gives an account of Kashmir that is at once continuous, exhaustive, and credible. This land was, as Kalhana says according to legend, once a mighty lake, Satisar, which was in time converted into the lush valley that it is, the 'intervention of the Gods being responsible for it' in a large measure. Speaking of the line of the kings of Kashmir, Kalhana describes, at the

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beginning, the reign of the glorious king of Kashmir, Gonanda, "worshipped by the region which Kailasha lights up, and which the tossing Ganga clothes with a soft garment".[28] The early mythical founder of the dynasty is followed by a long list of names. There is, then, mention of Ashoka and of his town, Srinagar, with "ninety-six lakhs of houses resplendent with wealth". Kashmir was later clearly a part of the great Kushana empire: the names of Huvishka, Juvishka and Vasudeva are preserved in its records, and the third great Council of the Buddhist faith, held in Kashmir by Kanishka, belongs to its history.

The gradual decline of Buddhism in Kashmir, save in large pockets like Ladakh, can be sensed in Kalhana's lines, and noticed in the explicit statements of the seventh century Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsang. The Hindu faith did assert itself here, one notes in Kalhana, and Kashmir clearly became an important centre of Shaivism, and of Tantric practices. The rule of the Huna Mihirakula, "cruel as death", establishing his control in about A.D. 528 came as an unhappy episode, but the Hindu dynasties survived, and Pravarasena the second, ruling in the sixth century, is recorded as conducting victorious campaigns outside of Kashmir, and building a magnificent city on the hallowed site, where Srinagar, the present capital, stands. It was then called Pravarapura, and finds mention in Hieun Tsang, in A.D. 631 as "a new city". With the first of the Karkota line of Kings, Durlabha Vardhana, in the early seventh century, what can be called "the Imperial stage" in the history of Kashmir began, which first culminated in the formation of a western empire, reaching into Central Asia, and then brought the Karkota dynasty to a brief "all India hegemony". As Andre Wink puts it,[29] the *rajayabhisheka* ['royal consecretion'] performed by Durlabha Vardhana, was the declaration of an intention, as it were, to establish an 'imperial' or 'universal' kingdom, the ceremony being performed, as was common in India, with the waters of pilgrimage centres from all over India, poured out of golden jars. There were some setbacks and partial submission to the Chinese emperors is hinted at: embassies were exchanged with the Chinese court and letters of confirmation received from there. Soon afterwards Lalitaditya Muktapida, the greatest of Kashmir rulers, who had established unusally good relations with the Tang Chinese, carved out a Western empire in Central Asia, Afganistan and the Panjab, between A.D. 720 and 730 and built an extraordinary army, using heavily armed cavalry of the Sassanid-Chinese type and new types of armour, soldiers being drawn from the Central Asian highlands, from Tukharistan in the upper Oxus valley, from Darad-desha in the upper Kishen Ganga, and from the Panjab. Then did Lalitaditya embark upon his *digvijaya* of which Kalhana gives a detailed and vivid description. This conquest of northern India by Lalitaditya, which was once believed to be a figment of Kalhana's active imagination, but has been proved by subsequent research, especially by Hermann Goetz,[30] as being substantially true, was an extraordinary event. The campaign that Lalitaditya Muktapida conducted into India took up most of his remaining reign, beginning with the subduing of Yashovarman, the Kanauj ruler, probably around A.D. 733. Lalitaditya extended his dominion far towards the east of India, Yashovarman joining him as a vassal-ally in his campaign. Jivitagupta of Gaur in Eastern India was vanquished and also joined in the *digvijaya*. Now Lalitaditya advanced "through Orissa to the Gulf of Bengal, then went to the Deccan and the Konkan ... and fought against the Parasikas in the south", finally returning to Kashmir through Gujarat, Kathiawar, Ujjain, Mewar and Thanesar. Than Lalitaditya no greater ruler of Kashmir is known. Rightly have scholars drawn attention to the enormous booty that he brought back with him from northern India, the East and the South, among it images of the kind that were to influence possibly the whole tradition of bronze casting and image making in Kashmir. Lalitaditya's contribution to the arts of Kashmir, in sculpture and architecture in particular, is justly remembered. Martand, the sun-temple that he erected, is one of the most extraordinary monuments of the sub-continent with all the variety of influences that it registers,

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and, in its own way, integrates.

Following Lalitaditya who founded his own magnificent capital at Paraspur or Parihasapura, there were other rulers: Jayapida, Lalitapida, Shankarvarman and the like. No great names are encountered, but some of them stand out, among them that of queen Didda (ruled A.D. 950 to 1003) of the Lohara dynasty with whom a famous inscribed bronze is firmly associated. But the country was weakening, the central authority falling apart. Civil war and violence were rife, and the Damaras "skilled in burning, plundering, and fighting", continued to harrass the state.[31] In this line Singhdeva happened to be the last, and it is in his reign that there was an invasion of Kashmir by the Tartars, great slaughter and destruction coming in its wake, The commander-in-chief of the Kashmir armies, Ram Chand, put up some semblance of resistance, relying upon two soldiers of fortune, Rinchen Shah from Tibet, and Shah Mirza from Swat. The time was the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

This is about the time that Islam makes a firm, growing appearance in Kashmir. The Muslim world had taken notice of Kashmir before, and one reads of a great number of saints and ascetics coming into Kashmir, settling there and bringing with them, peacefully, the message of Islam.[32] The Hindu dynasties and their power lay in ruin, and after several initial brushes with the Muslim faith, Kashmir finally passed into the hands of Muslim authority when Shah Mirza, also called Shah Mir, declared himself king of Kashmir, thus founding the line of the Sultans which continued for nearly four hundred years after that. Shamsuddin was the title that Shah Mirza took.

A little before this, according to available accounts, large scale conversions of the Hindu population of Kashmir to Islam had taken place, an event that was by and large peaceful, in sharp contrast to what had happend at many other places in the world. With the Muslim rulers controlling in general a large populace that lived in fair harmony with each other, the fourteenth century was a period of general expansion and consolidation of the Sultan's powers. In 1394 Sultan Sikandar who prided himself on the sobriquet that became attached to his name: 'But-Shikan', the idol breaker, came to the throne. Described by some as "a gloomy fanatic", the Sultan took upon himself to destroy, on a large scale, a great many buildings and temples of his Hindu predecessors. "To the people he offered death, conversion, or exile. Many fled; many were converted to Islam; many were killed, and it is said that Sikandar burnt seven maunds of sacred threads worn by the murdered Brahmins. By the end of his reign, all Hindu inhabitants of the valley, except the Brahmins, had probably adopted Islam".[33] In Sultan Sikander's time, Timur invaded India. Anxious to offer homage to the conqueror, the Sultan sent messages of amity and submission; eventually, his younger son had to follow Timur to Samarqand, having been unable to meet the conqueror as he was returning after the sack of Delhi to his homeland. This young son, Shahi Khan, spent seven years in Samarqand, probably more as a hostage than as a welcome guest. But during this period, it is recorded, he took the opportunity of interesting himself in the arts and crafts of Samarqand which was then at the height of its wealth and glory. From there, Shahi Khan returned to Kashmir. At the death of his father, Shahi Khan's elder brother succeeded to the throne and occupied it for a few years. Then it was Shahi Khan's turn to ascend it. The year was A.D. 1420; the event was momentous for the young king who assumed the little "Zain-ul abidin" lived to become one of the most celebrated figures in the history of Kashmir.[34] With him is associated a peaceful and far-sighted policy which healed the wounds of the Hindus persecuted by his father, as also led to a resurgence in the arts and crafts of Kashmir.

There was something of the great Akbar in Zain-ul abidin's person and policy. Wise, virtuous and frugal in his personal life, Zain-ul abidin is remembered till today as the great 'Badshah'. He remitted the poll-tax on the Hindus, encouraged the Brahmins to learn Persian which had become now the court language,

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repaired some of the Hindu temples, revived Hindu learning, and participated along with the Hindus in their festivals. In the field of the arts, it was he who is said to have brought craftsmen of all descriptions, carpet-weavers, saddlers, book-binders, gunsmiths, papier-mache makers, paper manufacturers, lapidaries, stone cutters, and the like, midwives, musicians and firework makers from Samarqand, encouraging them to settle in Kashmir permanently. A tribute paid to his memory by Mirza Haider of Kashghar who came to Kashmir in 1504 A.D. and became the minister of Sultan Nazuk Shah, the then ruler of Kashmir, is still frequently cited : "In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone cutting, bottle-making, window-cutting, gold beating, etc. In the whole *Mavara-ul Nahar* (the country beyond the river Oxus, i.e. Khorasan) except in Samarqand and Bukhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant.This is all due to Sultan Zain-ul abidin".[35] Abul Fazl, taking note of Zain-ul abidin in the *Ain-i Akbari*, says:[36] "He was a wise prince, devoted to philosophical studies and it was his fortune to enjoy universal peace. He was regarded by high and low as a special servant of God and venerated as a saint." The translation of a large number of works from the Arabic, Persian, Kashmiri and Sanskrit languages in his reign is also referred to by Abul Fazl. "During his reign musicians from Persia and Turkestan flocked to his court; among them Mulla Udi, the immediate pupil of the famous Khawaja Abdul Qadir, arrived from Khorasan, and Mulla Jamil who in singing and painting was pre-eminent among his contemporaries."

Turbulent days, however, were ahead. While the Sultan was able to keep the Chaks in some kind of control, after his death in 1470 his successors were not as successful. The government passed into the hands of the Chaks and they continued to control the valley till Yaqub Khan, the last of that line, after offering a stubborn resistance, submitted to the Mughals in 1586.

With its annexation to the Mughal Empire under Akbar, Kashmir became a part of the mainstream of the history of India. Akbar himself visited the valley, built a strong fort, promulgated laws that greatly improved the fiscal condition of the people. His son, Jahangir, who visited the valley several times, was inordinately fond of it and his accounts of the sights that he saw, are marked by evocative, lyrical pasages. He enriched the environs of Srinagar by the building of the Mughal Gardens and ordered the restoration of some buildings which had fallen to their original state, embellishing them with paintings on which painters (presumably Mughal painters), accompanying the Emperor were employed for a long time.[37]

Jahangir's reign, as also that of Shah Jahan, in Kashmir is marked by relative peace, and some encouragement of the arts. Zafar Khan, a governor of Kashmir under Shah Jahan, is especially mentioned as one devoted to the arts during this period. Aurangzeb's rule brought, however, a different tenor into the governance of the land. All accounts that treat of the Kashmiri Pandits of the valley refer to his rule as one of great tyranny, persecution, forcible conversion and deaths. It was the plight of the Kashmiri pandits who had fled from Kashmir and lost their families, it is said, which impelled Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth of the Sikh Gurus, to take up arms in defence of the Hindus against Mughal excesses. With the break-up of the Mughal Empire that started in the beginning of the eighteenth century, following the death of Aurangzeb, Kashmir also entered into a period of uncertainty and disorder. The eighteenth century in Kashmir is associated, for the greater part, with Afghan rule. Even though the Durranis had been invited into Kashmir by local discontented elements themselves, the rule of the Durranis is remembered as one of great tyranny and oppression. Lawrence records that most of the Pathan rulers "are now only remembered for their brutality and cruelty, and it is said of them that they thought no more of cutting off heads than of plucking a flower".[38] A great many restrictions were reimposed upon the Hindus of the valley. The Brahmins, the Shias, and the Bambahs of the Jhelum valley were

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specially picked up for maltreatment. It is in their agony that the people of Kashmir are said to have turned with hope to the rising power of the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh at Lahore. In 1814 the first Sikh campaign to Kashmir was mounted: it was unsuccessful. Finally, it was in 1819 under Missar Dewan Chand, who was accompanied by Gulab Singh of Jammu, that Kashmir was occupied. Sher Singh, Ranjit Singh's son, and the future Maharaja, was appointed Governor. Other Sikh Governors followed, including Colonel Mehan Singh in 1833, who is still spoken of with fondness and gratitude, having done his best to salvage whatever he could from the effects of one of the worst famines to visit the valley.

Finally it was into Dogra hands that Kashmir passed. The story of the rise of Gulab Singh of the Jamwal-Rajput clan to great eminence under the Maharaja along with his two brothers, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, is well known. In the anarchy that followed the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the Dogra brothers played a key part, Gulab Singh managing his own affairs and those of his family, very shrewdly. In the winter of 1845, when war broke out between the British and Sikhs, Gulab Singh stayed more or less aloof, and then appeared as a useful mediator. At that time two treaties were concluded. By one of them, the British made over to Gulab Singh, in return for seventy-five lakhs of rupees, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the east of the Indus and west of the Ravi. Gulab Singh was now the Maharaja not only of Jammu to which he belonged but of all Kashmir. It was not without effort that he succeeded in establishing control over the domains, with resistance coming from various pockets like Hunza, Gilgit etc. Finally, however, all recalcitrance was put down and Kashmir passed under Dogra rule. Gulab Singh died in 1857, to be succeeded by his son Ranbir Singh. The kind of peace that generally prevailed in the British Empire in India was now in a measure also experienced by Kashmir. There were troubles on occasion. But the period ushered in was by and large one of calm. Ranbir Singh, a devout Hindu like his father, paid a great deal of attention to the Jammu region where Hindus were in a majority. His rule was mild, and the people of Kashmir, Hindu. Buddhist, and Muslim, lived in great harmony, according to the accounts available.[39]

From the earlier period no figures concerning the composition of the population of Kashmir are available but religion-wise the population of Kashmir in 1909 consisted of 2,154,669 Muslims, 6,89,073 Hindus, 25,828 Sikhs and 35,047 Buddhists.[40] The Hindus were mostly to be found in the Jammu province, and the Buddhists mostly in Ladakh. Of interest to this study is the relative amity that prevailed between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, reigns like those of Sultan Sikandar, 'But-Shikan', and Aurangzeb notwithstanding. More or less peaceful conversions of large segments of the Hindu population to Islam earlier on and the healing rule of Sultan Zain-ul abidin, had much to do with this. There were Sayyid saints who come from outside and stayed on, treading the path of orthodoxy, including the famous Shah Hamadan. But there were Sufi saints whom one hears of in large numbers in Kashmir, preaching the doctrine of the closeness between all religions, and living simple lives themselves. Several names come to notice, including that of the woman poetess Lalleshwari. The Rishi sect that arose in Kashmir, the founders and followers of which built strong bridges between the Muslims and the Hindus, became one of the characteristic manifestations of this spirit of amity that marked the relationship between Hindus and Muslims for long periods of time in Kashmir.[41] Observers speak at length of the considerable penetration of Hindu practices and beliefs in the lives of Kashmiri Muslims. As the brief account in the *Imperial Gazetteer* states: "Islam came in on a strong wave, on which rode a fanantical king and a missionary saint, and history records that the Kashmiris became Musalmans. But close observers of the country see that the so-called Musalmans are still Hindus at heart. Their shrines are on the exact spots where the old Hindu *sthanas* stood, and these receive an attention which is not vouchsafed to the squalid mosques and the

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mean *mullahs*. The Kashmiris do not flock to Mecca and religious men from Arabia have spoken in strong terms of the apathy of these tepid Musalmans. There are many shrines, shrines of the Rishis, the Babas and the Makhdum Sahib Pirzadas, known as the Wami or 'National' as distinguished from the Saiyids and Saiyid-Pirzadas who are foreigners. And as in religion, so in social evolution, there has been little change upto recent times in the people of Kashmir."[42] This account, and this series of conclusions, may be somewhat exaggerated, but there is some truth in the observations; also much relevance, for they help explain the composite features of the culture that is reflected in the arts of Kashmir, especially in its painting.

Notes

1. Kalhana, I : 32-42. The 'book of kings' has been translated into English by various scholars, M.A. Stein being among the first to have attempted it. There are slight variations between the different translations even though the general sense conveyed remains the same. Reference therefore is being given to the actual verses from the text.
2. It becomes almost unnecessary to speak at length of the beauty of Kashmir which had a tremendous impact on the Mughals and especially on Jahangir who recorded in his *Memoirs*: 'Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring, ... a delightful flower bed, and heart-expanding heritage for derveshes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all description. There are running streams and fountains beyond count. Where the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated. In the soul-enchanting spring the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs are lighted up by the torches of banquet-adorning tulips." *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, II., 143-144, Jahangir returned to the theme of Kashmir several times in the *Tuzuk*. See, thus, I, 94, 96: II, 130ff. Like his father, Shahjahan's enthusiasm for Kashmir and its beauties bordered on the passionate. See, thus, his chronicler, Inayat Khan's account of the Emperor's desire, in 1634, to visit Kashmir, his "generous heart ... longing exceedingly to roam through the ever-green glades of the peerless vale of Kashmir". Inayat Khan's description, in the *Shah Jahan-Nama*, evidently reflects the Emperor's own fondness for the valley. "Without any doubt, this is one of the most favoured spots in the world; or rather it is a combination of the best of all of them, on account of the fresh and bracing salubrity of the climate, the luxuriance of the vegetation and foliage, the abundance of delicious fruits, and the constant succession of lovely gardens and pleasant islands --as well as a springs, lakes, cascades, and parterres. No other kingdom on the face of the globe has yet been discovered by the most experienced traveler that possesses such peculiarly charming features". *Shah Jahan Nama* of Inayat Khan, 121, 125.
3. Anand Koul, 1925, 1. This emphasis on the extent of the territories of Kashmir, in Pandit Anand Koul's writings, seems evidently to be motivated by the desire to establish the primacy of Kashmir under the Maharaja, in the eyes of the British government.
4. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series: Kashmir and Jammu*, I. This 1909 volume, according to the Preface, was written by Sir Walter Lawrence, even though he is not cited as its author.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.
6. Some of the major centres of Pahari painting are discussed in Archer, 1973; Khandalavala, 1958; Goswamy and Fischer, 1992.
7. For a brief discussion of the painted book-covers from Gilgit, see, *Infra*, 15.
8. Apart from the early work of Francke, (1914) and Tucci, (1949), the art of Ladakh, especially at Alchi, figures prominently in Snellgrove and Skorupski; Goepper, and Pratapaditya Pal, 1982.
9. *Alberuni's India*, I, 206.
10. Moonis Raza, Aijaz-uddin Ahmad, Ali Muhammad, I, ix.
11. *Ibid.*, ix.

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12. *Ibid.*, xi.
13. *Idem.*
14. Thus. Bernier, 426, who speaks of the caravans going annually from 'Kashmir to Katay'. 'The caravans returned with musk, China wood, rhubarb and Mamiron, a small root in great repute for the cure of bad eyes, and in returning through Great Tibet they further loaded themselves with the produce of that country such as musk, crystals, jade, and especially with a quantity of very fine wool of two kinds ...". For a good summary of Kashmir's commercial relations, see, Bamzai, 1980, 23-43.
15. See, thus , Sufi, I, 70-71, Bamzai, 1962, 226-27.
16. Bamzai, 1962, provides a useful list.
17. See, Tucci, 1949, I, 273 *et. seq;* for a translation of the biography of Rinchen bzang-po see, Snellgrove and Skorupski, 1980, 85-98.
18. See, Emil Esin's Appendix on the Bakshis in Basil Gray (ed.) 1979, 281-94.
19. For a useful list see Bamzai, 1962, 226-42.
20. Anand Koul, 1924, 28-9.
21. Goetz returns to this theme repeatedly. See, thus, his collected articles, 1969.
22. *Ain-i Akbari,* II 352.
23 *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri,* II, 145. "The flowers that are seen in the territories of Kashmir are beyond all calculation . Those that Nadirul-asri Ustad Mansur, has painted are more than 100".
24. Leach, 125.
25. Ibid., 124. The governorship of Kashmir was held twice by Zafar Khan, and there are accounts of the small, intimate court held by Zafar Khan, a man of obvious taste, while in Kashmir. In 1645, when the emperor Shah Jahan visited Kashmir, there is an account of his visit to the "Bagh-i Zafarabad" belonging to Zafar Khan, and great offerings made to the Emperor by the governor. "During the royal sojourn in Kashmir, His Majesty had already thrice gone for amusement and recreation to this lovely spot rivaling the gardens of Paradise; and in addition had also stopped at all the delightful springs on the road leading to it". *The Shahjahan Nama of Inayat Khan,* 292, 324, 330.
26. See Pal, 1975, 9.
27. What is given here is only the barest account of the history of Kashmir, mostly to serve as the context in which Kashmiri painting can be viewed. Kalhana's great work *Rajatarangini* remains the most authoritative of sources for the early history of Kashmir, with certain breaks in later times by Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajya-bhatta and Shuka. Useful accounts, in secondary works of the history of Kashmir, are contained in Lawrence, Mohibb-ul Hassan, Sufi and Bamzai, 1962.
28. Kalhana, I, 57.
29. Wink, 240.
30. 1969, 8-22. Hermann Goetz was one of the first scholars to point out the extraordinary achievements of Lalitaditya and to the need to regard as substantially correct Kalhana's account of this great Emperor's career.
31. Wink, 240.
32. Mohibb-ul Hassan and Sufi contain detailed accounts of the establishment of Islam in Kashmir, a theme that naturally figures prominently also in other histories of the region.
33. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series : Kashmir and Jammu,* 24.
34. All historical accounts of Kashmir contain detailed references to the reign of this great king. Contemporary accounts of Zain-ul abidin's reign are contained in Jonaraja's and his pupil Srivara's *Rajatarangini,* both written in the manner of Kalhana for Zain-ul abidin to whose court they were attached. Both works are of obvious value, even though considered to be far inferior to Kalhana.
35. *Tarikh-i Rashidi* of Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat, 434.
36. Abul Fazl, *Ain,* II, 383.
37. In the course of his long stay in 1620 in Kashmir, the emperor Jahangir turned his attention to the repair of some structures. "The picture gallery in the garden had been ordered to be repaired; it was now adorned with pictures by master-hands. In the most honoured positions were the likenesses of Humayun and of my father opposite to my own, and that of my brother Shah Abbas. After them were likenesses of Mirza Kamran, Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Shah Murad, and Sultan Daniyal. On the second storey (row?) were the likenesses of the Amirs and special servants. On walls of the

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outer hall the stages of the road to Kashmir were recorded in the order in which I had come to them." *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, II, 161-62.

38. Lawrence, 197. "The victims of these fields were the Pandits, the Shias and the Bombas of the Jhelum valley".
39. Our interest in the history of Kashmir virtually wanes after the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the focus of this study essentially being on painting which comes to an end towards the close of the nineteenth century.
40. Koul, 1925, 1.
41. This is a theme to which much attention has been paid in all traditional accounts of Kashmir. Questions can obviously be raised and doubts may continue to linger but by and large the peace that prevailed seemed to have been a fact.
42. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series : Kashmir and Jammu*, 35.

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Chapter Two

ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT

I

The roots of the artistic tradition that is reflected in Kashmiri manuscript painting on paper are not easy to trace, principally because of major discontinuities. Some insights can be gained through an acquaintance with the early art of Kashmir, however.[1] This would include Kashmir's great sculptural tradition in stone, bronze and wood as also its architecture which is best preserved in some surviving monuments like the Sun temple at Martand. This would also include the surviving murals from Buddhist shrines like Alchi which a bedazzled world is slowly coming to terms with.

Among the earliest surviving artistic remains in Kashmir are the terracotta tiles from Harwan. Dateable to about the fourth century A.D., they belong to a site which is believed by some scholars to be associated first with that little known ascetic sect, the Ajivikas, and appropriated later by the Buddhists. In broad terms, the region was also associated with sculpture belonging to the Gandharan tradition, for Kashmir formed an important part of the Kushana empire. But it is in the terracottas and stuccos of Akhnur and Ushkar that sculptural tradition has best survived in Kashmir. From very early on, the region seems thus to be linked with artistic traditions of various political dynasties, and influences from different traditions appear to have been received and internalised here.

There are indications of incursions into Kashmir of the Gupta style, in the period of Pravarasena II (C. A.D. 409-469), but it was under the celebrated Lalitaditya of the Karkota dynasty, one of the greatest of Indian kings, that even more significant developments took place in respect of arts. His *digvijaya* campaign (A.D. 733 to A.D. 747) which led him through Kanauj, Orissa, Bengal, the Deccan and Konkan and on his way back to Kashmir, through Gujarat, Kathiawar, Ujjain, Marwar, and Thanesar, was not only a dazzling military achievement which became eventually one of the markers of the transition from the classical to the 'medieval' period in Indian history, as Goetz[2] described it : it also yielded a rich artistic harvest. There are accounts of the enormous booty that Lalitaditya brought back with him from his campaigns. The art objects – and there are numerous references to them – that came to Kashmir in Lalitaditya's train consisted of images both portable and colossal, and they became deeply influential in laying the foundations of the kind of art that linked Kashmir afresh with the rest of India. Also filtering in, at this time, were other influences from Central Asia and Afghanistan. Out of all this arose monuments and sculptures in which are reflected the extraordinary cross-currents that flowed through the Kashmir of the eighth century. Commingling here were Roman, Byzantine, Sassanian and late Gupta elements. The Sun temple at Martand was only one of the manifestations of these extraordinary contacts and fusions. Goetz speaks at length of the enormous artistic activity under Lalitaditya, made possible by the immense riches that he had collected from his distant campaigns, "golden and silver idols, copper statues, jewellery, treasures of every type".[3] Goetz also speaks of the emperor's unprecedented artistic urges not being satisfied simply with local artists of Kashmir available to him. "Like Akbar, also Lalitaditya had to make use of artists from wherever he could find them, and in an empire extending from Bengal to the borders of the Arab Caliphate and from Central India to the borders of China proper these artists had needs to be of many nations and traditions. Thus, it is not surprising that we find the most heterogenous styles and elements, side by side with Gandharan, Gupta, Chinese and even Syrian-Byzantine. But likewise it must be observed that none of these styles could predominate.

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Lalitaditya had risen in a tottering world. The power and culture of the Guptas, Chalukyas and Pallavas were in the last convulsions of their agony. Tang China cracked, the Sassanian Empire had fallen, Byzantium struggled for survival, the Muslim Arabs had not yet developed an art of their own. Lot of skilled hands were available whom the general cataclysm had deprived of employment, but no tradition with authority to impose itself as a prototype. The art of Kashmir could bear one stamp alone, that of Lalitaditya's ambitions and dreams".[4]

In the course of arguing a case for the medieval art of Kashmir, Goetz suggests that the art of Kashmir under Lalitaditya could not have been simply an off-shoot of Gandharan art: it could only have derived from many roots. An earlier art may well have been there in Kashmir, but it "seems to have been of a modest character and played merely a subordinate role in the later rise of medieval Kashmiri art." Here he seems to suggest that there was a fertile soil ready to receive the seeds from outside that now fell in it.

The list of images we have from Lalitaditya's time, as given by Kalhana, is quite remarkable.[5] The Emperor's famous exchange of an image of the Buddha that he had brought back 'on the shoulders of an elephant from Magadha' and which his minister coveted, for two crystal charms, hints at an abundance of works. One of these images, as Kalhana says, "still shines in its brazen beauty as if clothed in brownish-red garment of the mendicants", and to which, "even to this day, metal bands are seen fastened around the seat, showing that it was once fixed on an elephant's back".[6] With Lalitaditya's successive reigns, not only metal images of this kind but several others in stone, ivory and wood are associated. Pratapaditya Pal[7] has, through intensive researches, brought together an extraordinary range of works that speak of the skills that were available in Kashmir in these centuries, prior to the coming of Islam. Some of the bronzes, like the famous one belonging to Queen Didda,[8] were inscribed in the local Sharada script. Others can be identified as 'Kashmiri' on the basis of the stylistic features that they share, and the conventions followed in respect of casting and iconography. Again, as Stanislaw Czuma[9] has established, in portable shrines made of wood in which ivory images were placed inside niches, it is possible to see not only local features but also influences that had come from all directions. Related on the one hand to the ivories of Afghanistan and, on the other, to the bronzes that are more easily associated with Kashmir itself, some of the ivory images are clearly products of the eclectic style that evolved in Kashmir at this time.

This eclecticism, reflected alike in architecture and sculpture, seems to be the key, the *leitmotif* of the art of Kashmir in this period. In the sculptures, aptly, some prominent features have been pointed out: the plain moulded rectangular bases taken from Gandhara; the plain circular nimbus, also Gandharan but continuing to be popular with Kashmiri sculptors, well into the Utpala period; the inlaying of the eyes and the *urna* in bronzes; the shape of the Buddha's face; the puffed and fleshy cheeks, the small but full lower lip as well as the large staring eyes; the rock formations under the seat with occasional animals seen emerging from their lairs. Likewise, iconographic features seen on the Vishnu-Vaikuntha images, or on the great *prabha* from Devsar,[10] the arrangement of heads in many tiers on the eleven-headed Avalokiteshwara[11] image in the Cleveland Museum, the emphasis on the pectoral muscles, must all have come from diverse sources, but were subordinated to the Kashmiri vision as it emerged between the sixth and twelfth centuries.

In painting, there are few survivals in Kashmir before the eleventh century. That there was a tradition of painting in the region, there can be little doubt, for some of the most important *shilpa* texts on the art of painting, including the relevant portions of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*[12] are believed to be of Kashmiri origin. The *Chitrasutra* of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, full of remarkable details, information and insights, is one of the seminal texts on the art of painting as it was practised in India around the sixth and seventh centuries,

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and can easily be seen as referring indirectly to such painting and sculpture as would have been within the experience of its Kashmiri author. The *Nilamata Purana,* an important eighth century text clearly linked with Kashmir, also mentions painting among the many arts that it lists, along with architecture, sculpture, weaving, dyeing, pottery etc. Another Kashmiri work, the *Kuttinimata* of Damodaragupta, speaks of painting being one of the many arts that women of the world were expected to learn.

All this notwithstanding, however, no paintings from the period before the eleventh century have actualy survived. A rare exception is the painted book-covers of the famous Gilgit manuscripts.[13] In those, a clear connection can be seen between the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva – painted vertically and not horizontally on the inside of the wooden covers – and the Central Asian work seen at Dandan Uliq. In many ways it appears to all go back to the tradition of Ajanta as it filtered northwards through the Gandharan territory, but at present there are no other works from Kashmir that one can cite from this period. In the absence of these, as said before, no clear conclusions can be drawn; only the existence of a tradition of painting in these parts can be established.

From the eleventh century and afterwards, however, from the area of Ladakh – far away from Gilgit and its manuscripts, but very much in contact with Kashmir and bound to it in many ways – dramatic evidence comes our way in the form of paintings on the walls of Buddhist monasteries, the most celebrated of these being at Alchi,[14] With these, and those at Tabo in the Spiti area now in Himachal Pradesh, one enters the exciting world of the great Buddhist teacher and translator, Rinchen bzang-po, whose very name touches off great resonances in the world of Buddhist art. The remarkable career of Rinchen bzang-po was drawn attention to in some detail by Tucci in his pioneering work on *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*.[15] The enormous number of monasteries in Western Tibet, Ladakh and Spiti associated with him are a legend in themselves. The 'Great Translator' is said to have been asked by his Master, the devout monarch, Yeshe-o, to bring back craftsmen from Kashmir where the monk was sent to gain more learning and also to collect learned works. Rinchen bzang-po took back with him, while returning to Tibet, thirty-two artists from Kashmir, among them undoubtedly architects, sculptors and painters Numerous monasteries were founded in consequence. At least one Kashmiri artist, Bhidaka, is named in Rinchen bzang-po's biography. This master-artist made a large image of Avalokiteshwara for his monk-patron. As the text says:[16] "Having begged for brass in Kashmir, he (Rinchen bzang-po) obtained a good deal, and so he asked an image-maker named Bhidaka to make as substitute for his father, an image of Avalokiteshwara, to his father's size".

From Toling, one of the monasteries from Western Tibet, also credited to Rinchen bzang-po, Tucci recovered, in 1949, illuminated pages of a *Prajna-Paramita* manuscript, owned at one time by the 'Great Translator' himself. The text is written in Tibetan but, as Pal remarks,[17] "the illuminations were most probably rendered by one of the Kashmiri artists brought back by Rinchen bzang-po. It may also be noted that Rinchen bzang-po, did return with manuscripts copied in Kashmir and some of these may have been illustrated". The style of these leaves and a book-cover, also published by Pal, is decidedly different from that of the Gilgit painted book-covers, having far more of an 'Eastern look'. But it is remarkably close to the style one sees in the murals at Alchi. What these manuscript leaves help to demonstrate at the same time is the existence of an early tradition of manuscript painting in Kashmir which seems to have been lost and obscured by time.

The murals, however, have survived and lead us into a wonderful, richly textured world. The shrines at Alchi have gigantic Bodhisattva figures in stucco, with magnificently painted dresses, the entire area of their enormous *dhotis* covered with figurative and decorative panels. A view of the world of those times seems to have been condensed in these paintings on the garments of the

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Bodhisattvas.[18] Apart from this, there is much else on the walls. There are evidently several layers of work, and not everything appears to have been done at the same time, but the earliest work belongs clearly to the eleventh century. Here commingling with the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taras, Mahakalas and Siddhas are whole *mandalas* with figures gliding through the skies; horsemen, warriors, kings and queens seated carousing, earnest conversations in progress, hunters coursing after game, bulls and elephants, tigers and leopards, fantastic *makaras* and *gajasimhas*. The images seem to be drawn from an extraordinary number of sources. The treatment of the figures, the costumes that they wear, the furniture that one sees, the patterns of textiles and caparisons – all bespeak at once of influences and borrowings. In a sense there is no surprise in this, for there was constant traffic to and fro between Kashmir and areas that lay far distant from it. Monks, scholars, artisans, traders were seemingly all participants in this majestic flow across boundaries. As Pal puts it: "Although seemingly isolated by mountains, Kashmir was in fact (in this age) a remarkably cosmopolitan area, where Tocharians and Turks, Iranians and Chinese, Dards and Tibetans constantly rubbed shoulders with one another. It follows that various styles of art from beyond its borders were familiar to Kashmiri artists who were just as capable of rendering Central Asian and Iranian motifs as the Tibetan".[19]

Several scholars, prominent among them Tucci, Snellgrove, Skorupski and Pal, have commented on the style of the work at Alchi, in the Dukhanga, the Sumstek, the Lakhang Soma and the Lotsava Lakhang. Many common features and characteristics are pointed out; even various sub-styles can be isolated and identified. Pal points to the manner "in which a wall is broken up into separate frames, each of which is an individual composition, although the final impression is of an organic whole". The emphasis is on the figurative form. The third dimension is never emphasised, in fact often not even attempted. "In this supra-mundane Universe, neither space nor time has any reality, nor is there any day or night. there are no shadows or internal sources of light within any of the compositional frames. Surfaces, whether filled with mandalas, paradises, scenes of discourse, epiphanies of the Tathagatas and Bodhisattvas or narrative scenes (where time and space do play a role), are uniformly lighted".[20]

It has been noticed that the colours are applied mostly as flat masses and the contrasting patches of colour in fact help forms become articulate; "they appear to dissolve the hues that define them so that the entire composition becomes an abstract design of shapes and colours",[21] the underlying abstraction becoming 'neither sterile nor chaotic". The colours – their purity, their luminosity, their enamel finish – are truly striking and seem to belong to the aesthetic traditions which the artists of the place inherited, "whether they were from Kashmir, Magadha, or Khotan, or were local recruits, and whether they were professionals or monks".

To be noticed is the clear connection between the figurative type seen at Alchi and the stone, metal and ivory sculptures of Kashmir belonging to the period of Lalitaditya Muktapida and the reigns that followed his till the eleventh century. Also remarkable is the use of several devices that seem to surface much later in the painting of Kashmir. Thus, in the famous drinking scene at Alchi, the principal figures are seen against a high, undulating line that rises in a curve behind them.[22] On the other side of this line are figures of several persons, half-concealed by this 'eminence'. There are groups facing each other, obviously meant to be seen as if at a distance and yet remarkably close, almost within immediate reach. Between these two groups of persons behind the hill rises a *chhatra,* the staff of which disappears behind the hill, leaving the *chhatra* to float in the air, unattached to anything visible. One notices figures flying, but also others on horseback, completely 'ungrounded', as if levitating, or gliding through the air. An unearthly air surrounds these figures which silently, swiftly, without obvious aid of any kind, and without treading the earth, seem to move across

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space.

While some of these devices or conventions have been remarked upon, there are others that, clearly linked as they are in a curious way to paintings in Kashmiri manuscripts of a much later date, have remained unnoticed. One dominant feature that one notices thus, while looking at the multi-armed images of the colossal bodhisattvas in stucco[23] or the painted images of other deities,[24] is that their additional arms seem to sprout from the elbows outwards and not, as should be expected, from the shoulders. In the large stucco figures in high relief this makes for a very strong impression. This treatment in the sculpted figures may have been due partially to technical reasons, but, as they stand, in these images the arms project very considerably outwards, to the extent that offerings of cloths and banners are placed in their outstretched hands by devotees today. While considerations of material and technique may have necessitated this treatment in the stucco figures, what is of great interest is the fact that even in the painted images the same treatment is frequently employed. There are images, thus, in which the additional arms proceed 'naturally' from the shoulders;[25] others in which some arms issue from the shoulders, while others from the elbows,[26] but still others,[27] in which they clearly sprout only from the elbows, two upper arms serving to bear six or eight forearms, the joints at the elbows in fact even emphasised through prominent shading. This treatment of the multiple arms was to surface much later, in Kashmiri manuscript painting.

Another interesting feature, little noticed upto now is the peculiar way of arranging the many heads of deities, as seen in the Dukhang and the Sumstek. Of the eleven-headed Avalokiteswara figure, the heads are arranged in tiers with a central vertical column of heads, rising from the main head upwards supporting other laterally placed heads spreading out from the three lower levels, In the case of the Avalokiteshwara figures, again, the heads are differently coloured: white, dark grey, black, pale yellow, orange, ochre-red, light-brown, and so on, evidently in answer to iconographic needs. Because of this massive, vertical arrangement of heads, the nimbus that rises behind them takes on an oval or a slightly-pointed arch shape.[28] This oval nimbus, it needs to be said, is markedly different from the flame haloes that adorn the heads of the prophets in Islamic painting. It is, stylistically, more related to the elongated *prabhas* which surround early metal images so often.[29] Another feature that may be remarked upon in passing is the lively treatment of lotus-seats in the paintings at Alchi. These lotuses, single or double, monochromatic or multi-coloured, spread everywhere in these paintings, stylised each time, highly noticeable.[30]

The iconographic features to which attention is here drawn along with other pictorial devices and colour schemes of predominating reds and oranges, are not peculiar to Alchi alone: they are shared by the work in other monasteries in Ladakh, Spiti and in Western Tibet. What is of interest is the fact that many of these features appear to have become embedded in the consciousness of the Kashmiri artists, never to be forgotten, it would seem, judging from the way they suddenly reappear in Kashmiri work, centuries later.

II

With the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir in the middle of the fourteenth century, attention shifts to the world of Islam. Now, another major source from which the arts of Kashmir are derived opened up. Contacts with the Islamic world clearly went back further than the time when the first Sultan, Shamsuddin, occupied the throne of Kashmir, for there had been a great deal of coming and going of many holy men of Islam into Kashmir.[31] But the establishment of the Sultanate led to the forging of formal links with the Persian and the Arabic world. Artistic and cultural strains from the Islamic world that may till then have been on the fringe of the awareness of Kashmir, which had retained

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its mixed Brahmanical and Buddhist character upto the thirteenth century, now began to permeate the very fabric of Kashmiri life.

Admittedly, it is a very mixed picture that the history of the early Sultans presents. The early tenor of peaceful co-existence between members of different sects and religions received a major set-back with the accession to the throne of Sultan Sikandar the idol-breaker, whose gloomy fanaticism led to massive destruction of old temples, the disfiguration of images, and under the influence of orthodox Sunni Sayyids, to the cruel persecution of Hindus and Buddhists.[32] But with the accession to the throne in 1420 A.D. of Sultan Zain-ul abidin of the 'golden reign', things took a dramatic and welcome turn for Kashmir.[33] Just as a ruler, efficient as an administrator, far-sighted as a statesman, Zain-ul Abidin brought peace to his subjects, and, with remarkable energy, encouraged the arts of peace among them. He is remembered for having been the agency through which some of the choicest of arts and crafts of the Islamic world came to Kashmir. His brief sojourn as a prince at the court of Timur in Samarqand bore him and Kashmir rich fruit, for it was from Samarqand that he imported, after assuming soverignty, master craftsmen in such large numbers, who founded in Kashmir the skills and industries for which the land was to gain so much fame in later times.[34] A slight touch of envy in Mirza Haider Dughlat's description of the arts of Kashmir, in the early sixteenth century is clearly noticeable when he writes:

> In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone-cutting, bottle making, window-cutting, gold-beating, etc. In the whole Mavara-al-Nahar (the country beyond the river Oxus) except in Samarqand and Bukhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant.[35]

There is the barest mention of painting or calligraphy in the accounts of Zain-ul abidin's time,[36] but the great encouragement of learning that is associated with his reign makes one take these activities almost for granted. One knows of the large number of distinguished scholars, poets, historians and philosophers, whose presence lent lustre to Zain-ul abidin's reign:[37] one knows also of the establishment of numerous places of learning. The Sultan not only patronised Muslim men of letters but also Pandits versed in Sanskrit learning. Among these were poets like Jonaraja and Srivara who, between themselves, took up the task of taking the *Rajatarangini* beyond the point where Kalhana had left it in the twelfth century. Being a scholar himself, Zain-ul abidin must almost certainly have maintained a royal library of his own, and one can envisage the learned men at his court possessing, commissioning, and writing books, among them, conceivably, illustrated and illuminated manuscripts. Even though nothing has survived, the existence of manuscripts of this kind in the reign of Zain-ul abidin can be put beyond doubt. At the same time it is possible to visualize a whole new language of design, common to the crafts of carpet-weaving, shawl-making, papier-mache work and book-illumination, among others, emerging at this time.

The period between the reign of Zain-ul abidin (1420-1470 A.D.) to the end of the Kashmir Sultanate in 1586 when it was supplanted by Mughal power, yields little in terms of hard information about painting in the region. However, there is an intriguing reference to wall paintings in a temple in Mirza Haider Dughlat's[38] personal account of Kashmir in his *Tarikh-i Rashidi*. Writing as he was in 1543-44, after his conquest of Kashmir, he makes an explicit statement that "now that I have subdued this beautiful country and seen all that is notable in it, whatever I shall write will be what I have witnessed." And then proceeds to describe Kashmir including its many wonders. Among them he lists the "more than one hundred and fifty idol temples in and around Kashmir" by which he presumably means the present day town of Srinagar. His description of the architecture of these temples is detailed even if his measurement 'seem to be open to question.

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Of a temple which he does not name he writes, "The capitals, the ornamentation in relief, the cornices, the 'dog tooth work', the inside covering and the outside, are all crowded with pictures and paintings, which I am incapable of describing. Some represent laughing and weeping figures, which astound the beholder.... In the rest of the world, there is not to be seen, or heard of, one building like this. How wonderful that there should (here) be a hundred and fifty of them." [39]

Unfortunately, not too much is clear in Mirza Muhammad Haider's description. Almost certainly however by, "pictures and paintings" is meant sculptures in relief – "pictures" and "paintings" being a mixture that one is familiar with from monuments both Buddhist and Brahmanical. What the Mirza means by "laughing and weeping figures" is difficult to make out : these were the kinds of figures that he was clearly unfamiliar with, and it is safe to conclude that they belonged to a tradition, perhaps even a style, that he had difficulty in comprehending. Paintings of the kind that the work at Alchi represents come to mind, with their unique blend of iconic images and genre scenes. But nothing can be said with certainty and all one has is this brief but most interesting reference to the survival of the tradition of wall painting in Kashmir into the sixteenth century that we have no trace of now save in Ladakh and related areas.

Of Persian manuscripts, illustrated or illuminated, nothing securely dated seems to have survived from this period. The cultural contacts with centres of Islamic power of learning and art however must have been strong, and it is more than likely that, with the holy men who kept up a sustained intercourse with Islamic centres in the Persian and Arabic worlds, or with embassies exchanged with these parts, manuscripts in the Persian traditions were coming into Kashmir in this period. One likely source for the import of manuscripts from the Persian world must have been Shiraz. Of all the major centres of Islamic civilization, culture and trade, it was Shiraz from which the greatest number of manuscripts, illustrated and illuminated, seem to have gone out to other parts of the world. The period of high quality work at Shiraz had come to an end in the middle of the fifteenth century perhaps, but commercial production – on an almost unprecedented scale – of illustrated and illuminated manuscripts had replaced it. As Basil Gray says of this period: "What we now find at Shiraz are a number of manuscripts of favourite works like the *Khamsa* of Nizami and the *Shahnama*, without dedication and very often with no place of origin but with miniatures clearly deriving from the Shiraz style of Ibrahim. They appear to have been rather rapidly and even carelessly executed though still with considerable verve and vigour."[40]

Shiraz was obviously not the only centre for the production of manuscripts for export, but it was among the most active. The evidence of Budaq Qazvini, writing in A.H. 984/1576-77, is of the greatest interest in this connection. He says "There are in Shiraz many writers of *nastaliq*, all copying one another, making it impossible to distinguish between their work. The women of Shiraz are scribes, and if illiterate, they copy as if they were drawing. The author [of these lines] visited Shiraz and ascertained for himself that in every house in this city, the wife is a copyist [*katib*], the husband a miniaturist [*musawwir*], the daughter an illuminator [*mudhahhib*] and the son a binder [*mujallid*]. Thus any kind of book can be produced within one family. Should anyone be desirous of procuring a thousand illuminated books, they could be produced in Shiraz within a year. They all follow the same pattern, so that there is nothing to distinguish them by."[41] One hears at this time even of replicas of manuscripts produced in large numbers .

To return to Kashmir: in the face of evidence of so many other crafts being founded in Kashmir in the fifteenth century, there seems to be little reason to believe that this did not happen as far as the arts of the book in Kashmir was concerned. Calligraphy, illumination, book-binding and of course painting must undoubtedly have come to Kashmir in this period, if they did not exist earlier.

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The scale of this activity is difficult to guess at, but if Shiraz served as any kind of model, as there is reason to believe that it did, considerable work in Kashmir might well have been done in this century, and in the ones that followed. Whether any royal or precious manuscripts, of the quality that one associates with the finest work done at Herat, Bukhara, Tabriz, or Shiraz entered the library of the Sultans, it may never be possible to determine. But itinerent scribes and painters might have frequently found their way into Kashmir besides local scribes and painters and illuminators who had established themselves there. A copy of the *Bustan* of Sadi of A.D. 1505 in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, to which Hermann Goetz drew attention a long time ago, was clearly completed in "the city of Kashmir" according to its colophon.[42] Based on its style questions could be raised about whether it is the work of Kashmiri scribes and painters, but there can be no doubt that the manuscript bears a physical connection with Kashmir, even if it was produced by an itinerent group of scribes and painters.

Drawing attention to Shiraz here in the context of Kashmiri manuscript painting is of use for there is a very general similarity of colour schemes and standardized compositions between routine, Shirazi work and the average illustrated manuscript of a Persian text produced in Kashmir. A preference for oranges and reds, a distinctive blue chosen for the sky, a preference for a high horizon, the quartz-like treatment of rocks, the rendering of large pennants held by unseen troops that match the spears of their opponents in the opposite corners, the summary treatment of landscape, the stylised trees, all seem to point to a connection. There are no names of scribes or painters that hint at a link; no manuscripts of known Shirazi origin have come out of Kashmiri collections; we do not even have information about Kashmiri scribes or painters tracing their ancestry to Shiraz. But the circumstantial and stylistic evidence about these links seems to be very strong.

III

The evidence of Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat apart, in the sixteenth century, we have some information even though indirect, as to the existence of a tradition of painting in Kashmir: this comes from Mughal sources. Among the large nmber of painters who are mentioned in the chronicles of the time of Akbar, there are as many as five painters who carry the epithet or surname "Kashmiri", Kamal, Haider, Muhammad, Ismail and Yaqub,[43] all of them Muslims. It is reasonable to presume that the word 'Kashmiri' appended to their names, points to their coming from Kashmir as much as Nand Gwaliori, from among the painters at the Akbari court, came from Gwalior, and Bhim Gujarati from Gujarat. Whether these painters from Kashmir were recruited during the Emperor Akbar's visit to Kashmir following its conquest, or whether they were themselves drawn to a metropolitan city like Agra, Fatehpur Sikri or Lahore, in the hope of being admitted to a prestigious Mughal workshop, is difficult to guess at.

It is clear, however, that all these artists were involved in working on some of the more important manuscripts painted for Akbar, even if in relatively minor capacities. Linda Leach suggests[44] that the efforts of these Kashmiri artists may have been somewhat provincial in nature, for their work seems often to have been secondary and the main portraits on the very folios that they were engaged to work on were done by the more important, or the more favourite, among Akbari artists.[45] Kamal Kashmiri, as she notes, worked on the *Timur-nama* (folio 146v) and on an unnumbered folio from the dispersed *Babarnama,* which had portraits by Madhu Muhammad Kashmiri worked on the *Timur-nama* too (on folios 177r and 252r), with retouching by Mukund on the latter folio, and on the *Babur-nama* in the National Museum (folio 113r); Ismail Kashmiri worked on the dispersed *Baburnama* (folio 82), with portraits by Lal; Haider Kashmiri worked on the *Timur-nama* (folio 165v), retouched by Mukund, the dispersed *Babur-*

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nama, and the Popular Mughal *Shahnama* of 1610. These five Akbari artists apart, one hears of two other Kashmiri painters at the Mughal court; Daud Kashmiri who worked on the popular Mughal *Shahnama* of c.1610; and Salih Kashmiri who worked on the 1598 *Razm-nama*. Then, of course, there is the resonant name of one of the greatest calligraphers at the court of Akbar who came from Kashmir, Muhammad Hussain,[46] *Zarrin Qalam*.

Due mainly perhaps to the absence of evidence of painting from Kashmir itself Linda Leach posits that painting activity did not exist because of a lack of a strong cohesive government structure that could make for a "unified school of painting" in the valley.[47] This conclusion is clearly arguable. We may simply have here a situation in which no securely dated or provenanced evidence on this subject has survived or surfaced.

Kashmir figures in this context yet again in the seventeenth century, when the name of Muhammad Nadir Samarqandi, the distinguished painter who worked for some time at the Imperial court, occurs in a manuscript of *Yusuf Zuleikha* completed in 1651. An inscription makes a clear statement in one of the paintings in this manuscript stating that it is the work "of the slave Muhammad Nadir of Samarqand" done "in the city of Kashmir, resembling paradise".[48] There is no necessary suggestion that Muhammad Nadir had settled down in Kashmir and it may well only be a case of his having finished that work in the course of a sojourn in Kashmir. To think of him as an "artistic immigrant", as Leach does, one of the many who were "attracted to the valley when it became noted as a muslim centre of learning", is possibly unwarranted. In any case, it is difficult to see Muhammad Nadir's work as being typical of Kashmir, judging from what one encounters there later. At the same time it is perhaps pertinent to point out that the five or seven Kashmiri artists mentioned before were also not working at the Mughal court in their 'native style', subordinated as they must have been to the vision of the Imperial ateliers. The local styles that painters drawn from different parts of India brought with them to the Mughal court one knows to have made only an evanescent appearance in their work done for Mughal patrons.

Muhammad Nadir's work is discussed at some length by Leach who believes that he must have spent long years in Kashmir. She discerns elements of Kashmir landscape in some of his work, and remarks : "Although none of the several other miniatures inscribed by Muhammad Nadir bears a reference to Kashmir, it is probable that the painter spent most of his working life in the area. His most common works are those of a stylised Iranian type which would have appeared in the Kashmiri environment".[49] One painting attributed to Muhammad Nadir showing Sufis and Mullas against the backdrop of a hilly landscape does suggest a setting in Kashmir, but then doubt has been cast on that attribution. What is interesting, however, is that some of the late insertions into the 1651 *Yusuf Zuleikha* manuscript are obviously replacement leaves, and seem to be in the hand of late Kashmiri artists.[50] This leads one to think of other manuscripts in which replacement leaves, apparently by Kashmiri workmen, occur, presumably because these artists were trusted to have the skills to adapt themselves broadly to the style of the manuscript, even if it was at a slightly reduced level of achievement.

The evidence it can be seen, thus, is of a mixed kind, and yields little except information about the presence of an artist like Muhammad Nadir Samarqandi in Kashmir. This could at least have resulted in his influencing, through his work, local painters, presuming that any contact was established with them. Another Mughal painter. more famous and earlier in time, had also spent some time in Kashmir : the great Mansur who accompanied Jahangir during his first spring visit to the valley in 1620. The Emperor personally commissioned his painter to depict more than a hundred Kashmiri flowers during this visit.[51] Some of this part of Mansur's work, including the red tulips now at Aligarh, has survived. Earlier, too, when Jahangir visited Kashmir in 1607, there were artists in attendance on him

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during this visit for the Emperor records his asking for a large Himalayan *Markhur* being painted;[52] likewise other works may well have been done in that year in Kashmir.

From the reign of Jahangir there is still further evidence of the presence of Mughal painters in the Kashmir valley. In 1620, the Emperor records that he found the gardens of Hari Parbat in Kashmir in disrepair, and a building where his father once sat in a state of disuse. The Emperor ordered the restoration of the building, and an official had it repaired and "adorned with pictures of master hands". As Leach rightly concludes, the context of this statement is such that one thinks of Mughal painters who had come in the entourage of the Emperor to Kashmir executing this work rather than local Kashmiri painters, whom the Emperor is unlikely to have referred to as "master hands".[53]

Linda Leach who has written thoughtfully about painting in Kashmir from 1600 to 1650, then draws attention to work that may have been done for and under Zafar Khan, a Mughal noble who was installed as Governor in Kashmir in Shah Jahan's time. Zafar Khan was evidently a cultivated person who gathered around himself literary men, Sufis and poets, and was fond alike of painting and music.[54] He seems to have been fond of collecting copies of authors' works written in their own hand to which he added portraits. One work, a double page from a *Masnavi*, dateable between 1640 and 1650 (Royal Asiatic Society MS. Pers. 310, folios 19v, 20) shows Zafar Khan holding a literary gathering.[55] It is a lively work in which the grandee himself sits holding the long stiff stem of a *hookah* in his hand, engaged in earnest conversation with a grave looking bearded man holding in his right hand a book that rests in his lap. There are several other men seated around this twosome, some of them holding books in their hands, clearly pointing to their literary affiliation: some others sit with hands folded in their laps; one person appears to be making notes on a scroll of paper; an attendant tends the *hookah;* yet another attendant waves a *morchhal* fan over Zafar Khan's head. Five musicians sit in the lower corner of the page at left; most interesting, an old painter – pincenez resting on his nose – is seen painting sitting at one end of the carpet: a sheet is pasted on a board steadied by him with the left hand, the right hand holds a brush, as the man looks keenly at the two principal figures, as if observing them for a portrait. By his side, on the carpet, lie a *basta*–satchel and a brushcase, with some shells for colours. What places the painting in Kashmir, apart from the presence of Zafar Khan who was in the valley between 1640 and 1650, is the receding landscape, distinctly Kashmiri, with hills rising behind a number of buildings at the edge of a lake that the painter allows us a glimpse of through the window that opens behind the two principal personages. In this manuscript there are other indications of the scenery of Kashmir being recorded as observed by his painters, and there is a page 'that may show Zafar Khan's own garden'.[56] In the present double page, one also sees a great deal of decorative painting – perhaps papier-mache panels, on the wooden walls of the chamber, besides a number of winged figures painted on the spandrel of the two arches that frame the scene.

What relevance the works of Mansur, or those of Muhammad Nadir Samarqandi, done during visits to Kashmir, have to Kashmiri painting in general can be a matter only for speculation. But, assuming that native painters may also have been active at this time, some fruit must have resulted, some connections established.

Mughal work apart, the presence in Kashmir of illustrated works done in other styles during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be established. The 1505 *Sadi* manuscript in the Filzwillian Museum, Cambridge, to which Hermann Goetz drew attention, has been noted. The style of that work is distinctly Persian, and its physical connection with Kashmir is undoubted: thus, it was possibly one of many such that came to Kashmir from outside from the fifteenth century onwards. Manuscripts written and painted in a foreign style but executed in

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Kashmir, possibly by itinerent artists, might well have been common. From the early eighteenth century we have a manuscript to which Losty drew attention. A *Shahnama,* only the second half of which has survived, from the accession of *Lahrasp* onwards which, according to a colophon, was completed at 'Rajur' in A.H. 1131/A.D. 1719.[57] There are 97 miniatures in the work and three colophons, 'most difficult to decipher', but yielding information that it was copied by one Kalil Allah, 'Haft Kalami' (seven-penned) for a mahant 'Ajagat Singh Jiv', a vizier in the reign of Raja Azmat Allah Khan. Losty argues for the Kashmiri origin of this manuscript, believing that this 'Rajur' is the same as Rajauri in Kashmir which finds frequent mention in the *Rajatarangini,* and falls on the road that the Mughal emperors, including Akbar and Jahangir, often took to Kashmir. Rajauri had an interesting history: its Hindu rulers converted to Islam in about 1500 but continued to retain the title of Raja; taking, in fact, two names, one Hindu, and the other Muslim. Raja Azmat Allah Khan is recorded as being the ruler of the place in 1719, having spent the very early years of his life, when his throne was seized by an uncle, in Delhi with one of the wives of Aurangzeb, Rahmat-un nissa, a Rajauri Princess. When older, the boy prince returned to Rajauri, claimed his throne, and apparently ruled till 1760. This evidence Losty believes to lead to the conclusion that this 1719 manuscript is a Kashmiri work: he derives support for his argument from another *Shahnama* manuscript, an 'imitation' dated A.H. 1090/1679 A.D., also done at Rajur in the reign of Raja Inayat Allah Khan with "paintings in the same style as the 1719 manuscript". This Raja Inayat Allah Khan was apparently the grandfather of Raja Azmat Allah Khan for whom the vizier Mahant Ajagat Singh Jiv, worked in 1719 A.D. the year of the completion of Kalil allah's copy. However, Losty feels that the paintings in the 1679 copy in the private collection in London "must have been added in c. 1720, as they are in precisely the same style as the 1719 Shahnama."

While this leads to the intriguing prospect of our having here, in 1719 or 1720 A.D., illustrated manuscripts in Kashmir of a text that was to figure countless times in Kashmiri paintings later, the style in which the work is done raises some questions. It is not recognisably Kashmiri as we know it from later work. Losty speaks of the style of the *Shahnama* as "one of great richness achieved by lavish use of gold and silver and good quality of pigments; the paintings are by an artist of originality without any models to follow for his compositions".[58] These traits we do not associate prominently with Kashmiri work. But Losty also speaks of it having "on occasion... a Deccani feel about it – female costumes, occasional Deccani turbans, favourite colour combinations of greens and purple, blues and pinks, the sky painted in bands of gold and the occasional composition in layers", but goes on to add that "it is noteworthy that many of these (features) are also in Kashmiri painting". He notices conscious attempts made by the painter to indicate the Iranian origin of the text through the use of Iranian turbans, peshwazes, etc. "Landscape is normally a flat green, olive or brown ground dotted with regularly disposed tufts of grass, and ending in a hilly high horizon from which protrude trees buildings or people. Rocks are frequently depicted in the vivid shades of blue and purple, brown and orange, but rarely terminating the landscape or protruding above the horizon. Water is silver or silver green in the old fashioned basket pattern and whorls".[59] The architectural details appear to be drawn from several sources, and the painting itself reflects strands of Sultnate, Persian and Mughal work. Diverse elements seem to have fused together in this manuscript. The paintings range from a full page to a horizontal strip in size.

As noticed before, however, the style of these paintings especially the figuration, the female types, the quality of the drawing, the complexity of the compositions, the ease of manner with which groups are rendered, the furnishings seen in interiors, the rising, finely painted tops of trees, the flowering bushes rising above the back walls of the palace, the very refined painting of vases inside niches, distance this work from Kashmir, for this is not what Kashmiri

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painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth century seems to have been. Also, the occurrence of full-page illustrations, occupying spaces larger than those within which the text is written, and of conventions like basket-weave patterns in the treatment of water appear alien to the commonly known Kashmiri style of this period. If the identification of "Rajur" of the colophon with Rajauri is correct, and the ruler Azmat Allah Khan is indeed the ruler of this little hill state in the region, then this manuscript needs possibly to be seen as belonging to the same category as the Persian and the Mughal works referred to above: work done *in* Kashmir but essentially by "outsiders". There is in the first place room for doubt – created by the difficulty in the reading of colophons. But accepting that the work *was* done in Rajauri, it could be done by an artist during a temporary sojourn in the valley, or by an itinerent artist working on commission in the course of professional travels. If not, the only conclusion one can derive is that the style in which this work is done somehow ran aground in Kashmir. For, from the eighteenth century or the one following, there is nothing quite like this work that can be placed securely in Kashmir. At most, then, like other Mughal works, this manuscript may have helped towards the formation of taste in Kashmir, or left subtle vestiges that entered into the body of Kashmir work as it developed a little later in this century.

One has to recognise that one is up against a problem. The near total absence of firmly identifiable 'Kashmiri' works in the centuries between the eleventh and the seventeenth, – one is leaving out of consideration works of clear Mughal or Persian origin or Deccani-looking works – makes one wonder seriously about the state of painting in the region in this period. The existence of painting can be guessed at, but the style remains unknown. For example, Taranath, the historian of Buddhism, also referred to painting when he wrote in 1608: "In Kashmir, too, there were in former times followers of the old Western school of Madhyadesha; later on a certain Hasuraja founded a new school of painting and sculptures which is called the Kashmiri school".[60]

The statement is obviously made by Taranath with reference to the past, a period considerably older than his own, for in a reference to the Madhyadesha artists eslewhere, there is mention by him of the seventh century ruler, Harsha Vardhana, whom he designates as King Shila, at whose court lived a great "delineator of the Gods", Sringadhara, born in Marwar.[61] The reference to Hasuraja, the founder of the "new Kashmir school of painting and sculpture", according to Taranath, is thus seemingly related to an earlier time that could be anywhere between the seventh century and the seventeenth. However vague it may be – and one cannot lightly dismiss Taranath's evidence – it is widely believed now that Hasuraja must indeed have been a real person. While writing of the murals of Alchi and Tabo, Taranath's evidence about the existence of a Kashmir school is sometimes pressed into service by scholars, and it is that kind of work to which he was referring that is taken as possibly representing "the Kashmir school". Much of this, of course, belongs to the domain of speculation.

There is another situation that one can envisage as far as the period between the eleventh and the seventeenth century goes. That relates to the quiet continuance of a tradition of painting at the popular or ritualistic level throughout this period. A large number of manuscripts on paper, all of them Brahmanical, devotional and ritualistic, none of them dated or provenanced, many of them sparsely illustrated, have survived from Kashmir.[62] Being works on paper, they have to be dated after the fourteenth century; placing them more prescisely in respect of time is not easy, but it is not unlikely that many of them belong to this very period. The tradition of ritual painting on walls and floors which can easily be visualised as spilling over into books, is obviously old. Considering the conservatism inherent in art of this kind, and the strong adherence to their own faith by that part of the population of Kashmir which did not convert to Islam, principally the important Pandit community, this tradition could well have silently

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gone on for centuries. Its birth may somehow be related to the kind of iconic images that occur in manuscripts like those discovered in Gilgit or Toling, even though those are Buddhist in subject and character. But there is no reason to believe that there were no 'Hindu' or Brahmanical works of the same kind done in Kashmir during this period. There is an interesting, and obviously fairly old, tradition according to which paintings of gods and goddesses, of flowers and animals, were gifted to every boy and girl in a Kashmiri Pandit family on a special day, the *Gauri Trittiya,* the third day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magha (January-February), every year.[63] It is also known that every Hindu house was decorated with ritual paintings or drawings on the wall each year on the *Asadhasattvin*, the seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Asadha (June-July).[64] There are frequent references to houses being brightened up with drawings, and painting of floral designs on special occasions in families, such as marriages, thread-investiture ceremony etc.[65]

Preserved in these traditions, folkish as they might have become with passage of time, is possibly a memory of more serious work, of painting of the kind that may have belonged to illustrated manuscripts of ritual or prayer texts in Kashmir. A phenomenal number of *gutkas,* prayer books containing anthologies of sacred texts, illustrated in a recognisably Kashmiri style, must once have existed. For even today practically in every Kashmiri household in the valley, in priestly families in the plains of the Punjab and in the area once covered by Pahari Painting, some illustrated manuscript or the other is to be found.[66] The number of paintings in most of these small prayer manuscripts is relatively small, a painting ordinarily occurring at the beginning of a new text within an anthology to serve as a frontispiece. There is very little narrative intent in the paintings inside these *gutkas*; the work tends essentially to be iconic in character; the intention is to invoke the image of a deity, god or goddess, through a visual *dhyana* as a support for concentration. In this context it is of interest to notice that even as late as the present day, the tradition continues of 'pictures' of deities being brought as a gift for their *yajamanas* by family priests in Kashmiri Pandit families.[67] These pictures are now not necessarily painted by hand, and consist often of inexpensive oleographs or machine-printed, calendar type paintings. But, in the centuries preceding the present one, undoubtedly hand-painted pictures were locally produced and brought into households. The level of skills in this kind of work may not have been of the highest, but one can guess at the fact that a close adherence to iconographic accuracy must have been observed. This alone is a matter of some significance.

In passing, it needs to be mentioned that following the coming and the spread of Islam in Kashmir from the fourteenth century onwards, and the gradual adaptation of Kashmiri Hindus to the situation, a certain differentiation of functions slowly emerged among the Kashmiri Pandits. This was an "integral duality corresponding to the divergent necessities of the political and ritual world".[68] The evolution of this functional bifurcation was apparently a lengthy process, as Henny Sender says. Those who specialised in the secular sphere, who studied Persian and undertook administrative employment, became known as the *karkuns*; and those who engaged in ritual practices requiring a knowledge of Sanskrit, were labelled as *bhasa bhatts,* and informally known as the *Gurus*".[69] Another group was that of *jyotishis*. It is from the latter category that the priests of the community were drawn, and it is possibly among these groups that iconic paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses survived for several hundred years. These paintings, especially in respect of their iconography, were later to enter the mainstream of Kashmiri painting as reflected in illustrated manuscripts of Hindu texts in Persian versions that were steadily produced. The *karkuns,* always close to royal authority, working for the State, sometimes in the highest of positions, were apparently well-versed in Persian as a rule, some of them attaining great proficiency in the language. One hears of an extraordinary number of Kashmiri

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Pandits who wrote prose and poetry of great distinction in Persian, besides being appointed to positions of high rank within Kashmir and in distant areas stretching from the Punjab to Uttar Pradesh, from Maharashtra to the Deccan.[70] There was apparent need for this category of persons to have access to works of Persian literature for which they must certainly have developed an enthusiasm[71]– works like the *Diwan* of Hafiz, the *Gulistan* of Sadi, the *masnavi* of Maulana Rumi, the *Khamsa* of *Nizami*, to take examples – as also to works that might have been closer to their hearts: those relating to Hindu literature, the epics, *Puranas*, the *Bhagavadgita*, for instance, many of which had already been translated into Persian from Sanskrit originally. If among them grew the desire to have copies of works of the latter category illustrated by professional painters of the kind that routinely turned out *Shahnamas* and *Diwans* of Hafiz etc., then their 'own' kind of iconic painting, which had preserved the iconographies of Hindu gods and goddesses intact across the centuries, must naturally have been drawn upon.

At any rate, it would seem as if, somewhere in the seventeenth century, if not earlier, painting activity began to get organised in Kashmir in ways that one would be able to recognise later. The impulse could have come from any of the many possible sources. The need for paintings, in illustrated manuscripts, as felt by Kashmiris who were fond of learning, those that grew up with Persian or gained proficiency in it, and lived their lives in the awareness of Persian culture, may have been satisfied through the import of illustrated works from outside, from centres like Shiraz, as pointed out earlier. A stray painter, a local talent, inspired by work from abroad, may have appeared. Inspiration may have been derived from Mughal models; or tales of the glories of the Mughal court where some Kashmiris had evidently gained entrance on the strength of their skills in painting, may have exercised some influence. But something did happen around this time to which one owes the intense, widespread activity in painting that this study, for the most part, is devoted to.

IV

The chronology of Kashmiri painting as seen in illustrated manuscripts is not easy to establish. The materials are widely scattered, and securely dated works from earlier than the eighteenth century are rather rare. This does not have to lead to the conclusion that there was no work done in the seventeenth century or earlier: documents may well have been lost. In any case, when we encounter, towards the end of the seventeenth century, an occasional dated document, the style seems to be well-formed, evolved, with an identity of its own, not simply a provincial version of Iranian work that it is sometimes taken to be. Here, one is not speaking of the much earlier work in painting, of the kind represented by the Gilgit book covers, the Toling leaves, or the murals of Ladakh and Tabo – they lie far back in the past. Nor does one speak here of Persian or Mughal works – the Sadi of Fitzwilliam Museum, or the work of Muhammad Nadir Samarqandi, or that done for Zafar Khan: that work is recognisably of a different order. The paintings that are here regarded as Kashmiri, belong to illustrated manuscripts, or exist idependently of them, represented by the manuscripts and paintings discussed and reproduced below: they constitute the mainstream of this work, work that is instantly identifiable once one has learnt to 'recognise' it.

In theory, paintings could have started being produced in Kashmir soon after the introduction of paper, somewhere in the fifteenth century. Some of these may also well have been of the Hindu, iconic or ritualistic kind, but these are difficult to date because of their folk-based and highly conventional nature. But among the early surviving works from the seventeenth century are some fragments of large-sized panels of painting on paper, backed with cloth now in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum at Srinagar, (see, P. 2.) . They evidently formed part of a *torana* arrangement which may once have belonged to a door in a temple or

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a private shrine in a well-to-do Pandit household.[72] The theme of the panel relates to the ten avataras of Vishnu with special emphasis on Krishna from whose life some details are taken. Not all the panels of this *torana* have survived, but there are enough of these to lead one to this conclusion. These paintings show, in their style, only a limited awareness of Iranate work in Persian manuscripts, and bear a decidedly archaic look. A brief inscription in *Sharada* is placed discreetly on what could be seen as the 'first' panel, that shows the battle between Vishnu in his Matsya incarnation and the demon Shankhasura. The second *avatara* is painted in a panel vertically above the first one; one can thus see the arrangement of the *torana* as starting, at one side, from the bottom upwards, continuing on the horizontal, lintel-panel above, and then 'descending' on the other side with the last *avatara*, Kalki, represented at the bottom. The *Sharada* inscription is difficult to read. It is certain, however that it does not yield any information on the date of the work.

Losty draws attention to a manuscript in Punjabi of the Ashvamedha Parvan of the *Mahabharata*; V.S. 1749/ A.D. 1692 in a private collection in London, "which bears numerous illustrations in two styles, the earlier being a provincial Mughal style of the late seventeenth century, the other a Kashmiri style of a century later".[73] The manuscript not being published, it is difficult to offer any comments on the dating of the work on the basis of this description. The existence of a 'Kashmiri' manuscript at the end of the seventeenth century, however, should in itself be perfectly conceivable. Adamova and Greck have published a manuscript of the *Mahbub-al-Qulub*, a collection of moral tales and anecdotes, formerly in the collection of the Amir of Bukhara, now in the Leningrad Public Library where it reached via the Library of the Winter Palace.[74] This very Kashmiri looking manuscript bears the date 1112 A.H./A.D. 1699-1700 (?) on its first folio, the brief text of the inscription reading: "The book of *Shamsiya* and *Kakhkaha*, comprising 230 main and six blank folios, and containing 81 illustrations was completed in Rabi II of 1112 in the land of Kashmir." Another date appears at the end of the text, (A.H. 1113/A.D. 1701-1702 A.D.), suggesting that the work may have been started in the previous year and ended in this. One owner's seal on the Ist folio is obliterated but there is another one with the name of Hassan, 1211 AH/1796-1797 A.D. This is almost certainly a late owner's seal; and the date on the first folio, 1113 AH/A.D. 1701-02, is perfectly plausible. This document takes one firmly into the seventeenth century as far as Kashmiri painting is concerned. The manuscript exhibits the contours of the Kashmiri style in its developed form.[75] The double illuminated page with its broad borders of arabesques and floral patterns, the ornamentation within the triangular panels on the pages, the narrow floral scroll on the outer margins, reveal in themselves a departure from the Persian models of illumination of similiar surfaces. The colouring is again distinctive, far more of pinks and purples being used here, and a different shade of blue employed than what one ordinarily sees in Persian illumination. The floral ornament is also very different, in many respects derived so closely from the designs on Kashmiri shawls and papier-mache work. The paintings have a clear 'local' colour scheme, oranges and purples and pinks predominating in some folios and palpably present in others; the figuration is different; some Kashmir elements in the women's dresses are clearly discernible; there is a freedom of treatment in disposing elements on the page or in rendering animals and birds all of which assert a distance from Iranian models, and a distinct Kashmiri identity.

Works of this order kept being produced in very large numbers in the eighteenth century. A manuscript of *Khusraw Shirin* appears early on in the century, being dated A.H. 1118/A.D. 1706, also from the former collection of the Amir of Bukhara.[76] As the century advances, more and more dated Kashmiri illustrated manuscripts come to one's notice. This kind of work continues into the nineteenth century, and works that bear dates like 1806, 1811, 1830, among others, can be cited. For the Sikh court at Lahore and, in part, for the Sikh nobles

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in Kashmir after the establishment of Sikh hegemony a large number of works were produced by Kashmiri craftsmen and artists. Srivastava lists three well-known Hindu scribes, Hardas, his son, Raja Ram Tota and his grand son Daya Ram Tota, who were active at Lahore, several manuscripts bearing their names as scribes, and some of them dated.[77] Raja Ram Tota in fact was a gifted calligrapher, judging from the fine Ragamala volume in his hand formerly in the Raghunath Temple Library at Jammu, and now in the National Museum at Delhi, with long texts in Persian written in very precise and elegant *nastaliq* characters.[78]

The Ragamala of Pt. Raja Ram bears the date A.D. 1873 according to an inscription within a roundel on the opening folio of the book. Apparently, work of very high quality continued to be done till this time. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the art both of scripting and of painting seem to have drifted towards decline evidently because of the arrival of different technologies. Printing by lithography and later by the 'steam press' quickly provided alternatives to handwritten and illustrated manuscripts. The early printed work of this kind was without any colours, but even this changed with time, in the nineteenth century itself. Hand-painted lithographs, oleographs on a small size, hand-painted block prints, were all coming in. There is no firm indication of the terminal date by which illustrated manuscripts ceased to exist in Kashmir, but it would be surprising if one found one dated in the twentieth century.

To go back briefly to the nineteenth century painted works again. The dating of works of a ritual and devotional character with Hindu themes is more problematic than of works in Persian, or to those related to Persian literature. Colophons are extremely rare in these cases for in a sense the works belong, like their texts, to a timeless category, independent of the changes overtaking the world. A *gutka* with prayer texts, like the *pancaratna* or a *stotramala,* which bears a date, the name of a scribe or painter would be very uncommon. Few dated works in this category, especially those in Persian characters being translations or versions of ancient Hindu texts, occur, but they form exceptions to the rule.

Some of the *gutka* type manuscripts, those that prominently reveal the influence of Pahari work on their paintings, can be placed in time with some confidence.[79] But this one owes to one's knowledge of the developments in Pahari painting, independent of Kashmiri work. No clear statements from this period are available again, but a number of illustrated manuscripts of prayer texts, paintings which reflect strong Pahari influences and inputs, come from the early part of the nineteenth century, rather late 'Kangra' mannerism being noticeable in their style. The facial types, the furnishings, the grouping of figures, the elements of decoration, especially the floral borders as they are conceived and executed, were often taken from the kind of Kangra work which had become the standard style of the hills in the early nineteenth century, and had undoubtedly spread to Jammu and other states west of the Ravi, where under Dogra rule many of these mixed style manuscripts are likely to have been produced.[80] This nineteenth century work has a flavour of its own, but it was being done at the same time as the Iranate work in manuscripts in Persian.

From nineteenth century Punjab, it is possible to date an occasional, even ambitious, work of a religious nature, bearing inscriptions in Gurmukhi characters. The four large folios in the National Museum at New Delhi, which were evidently intended as annexures to a devotional Sikh manuscript, show, on two leaves, a devout person identified as "Sodhi Bhan Singh" engaged in worship.[81] In one of the leaves, in the central panel, we see the Sodhi worshipping Mahakala and Mahakali, but the folio shows, around the central circular panel, representations of the ten *gurus,* each with disciples or family members, leaving no doubt about the Sikh affiliation of the manuscript of which this folio must have been a part. Sodhi Bhan Singh is seen again in a magnificent

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rendering of the Vishvarupa of Vishnu-Krishna where he stands, like Arjuna on the other side, adoring the vision. While these folios are not dated, another illustrated text, the *Gurbilas,* now in the Institute of Oriental Studies at Leningrad, mentions its being commissioned by the Sodhi.[82] The date of the *Gurbilas* is A.D. 1838; the National Museum folios can be seen consequently as belonging roughly to the same period, between A.D. 1830 and A.D. 1840.

Within this framework of dates, from c.1650 to c.1900, a period of 250 years, most of the Kashmiri style illustrated manuscripts can be placed. It is not easy, except in the case of works like those from Jammu with strong Pahari influence, to date them only on the basis of the intrinsic evidence of style. One can make guesses, and rely naturally upon whatever dated works are available. But in general dating presents a peculiar problem in Kashmiri painting. No consistent trends can be discerned in the state of our present information, and there seems even a reason for this. From the same period came diverse works; those that are sumptuous in appearance and refined in style and those on the other hand that are extremely summary in character and generally coarse of quality. It was often a matter of the kind of commission that the painters received:[83] payments in cash were involved; the means of the patrons varied a great deal; the skills that itinerent groups of scribes and painters commanded must have been of different levels; and the casual patrons who had manuscripts copied and illustrated for themselves often had no choice other than to get the work done from the group that happened to be active in their vicinity. Works from the same period tend to be very varied in quality. There is at any rate no linear development within the main style that is easy to trace.

Notes

1. The early work of Goetz on the art of Kashmir still remains invaluable for piecing together a picture. His articles collected in Goetz, 1969 (b), touch upon various aspects of the early art of Kashmir and have been drawn upon here extensively, as has been the important work of Pratapaditya Pal, 1975, 1989 (1) and 1989 (2). Also, see Goetz' essay on "Kashmir art" in *Encyclopedia of World Art,* 1959 -- 1968, VIII.
2. 1962, 8-22, 37-67.
3. Goetz, 1962, 46.
4. *Ibid.,* 46-47.
5. Stein, I, 146-47.
6. *Ibid.,* 147.
7. 1975, and 1989.
8. Reproduced in Pal, 1975, pls. 51 a, b. The bronze was published first by Kak, 1923. The work is now in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar.
9. 1989, 57-76.
10. This great *avatara-prabha* was drawn attention to by Goetz as early as 1953. It has been reproduced several times since, including in Goetz, 1969, Pls XXVI-XXVII, Pal, 1975, Pls. 11a, b. c.
11. Pal , 1989 (1), Pls. 16, 17, 18.
12. The 'Chitrasutra' from the Third Part of the *Purana* was published in English translation by Kramrisch, 1928. Subsequently, the work has received fuller treatment in Priyabala Shah, 1958, 1961, and Sivaramamurti, 1978.
13. Banerjee, 1968, 114-18.
14. Detailed references and discussions about these great murals figure in Tucci, 1949; Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977, 1980; Pratapaditya Pal, 1982; and Goepper, 1984.
15. 1949, 273 *et seq.* The biography of Rinchen Bzang-po is translated in Snellgrove and Skorupski, 1977, 1980, 85-98.
16. Snellgrove and Skorupski, 1980, 92.
17. 1989 (2), 133.
18. For detailed reproductions see, Pal, 1982, Pls. S.1 to S.18.
19. Pal, 1982, 26.

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20. *Ibid.*, 48.
21. *Idem.*
22. See, Pal, 1982, Pl. D23. Much the same treatment can be noticed in the scene with the rearing horse below a shrine in the detail from the painted *dhott* of the Bodhisttva. Rep. in Pl. S.5. where some figures are concealed partially by a curving 'hill'
23. *Ibid.*, Pls. S.1, S.2 and S.3.
24. *Ibid.*, Pl. D.24, S.36, S.65 and S.66.
25. *Ibid.*, Pls. S. 30, S.32, for example.
26. *Ibid.*, Pls. D.14, D.15, S.62, S.68, for example.
27. *Ibid.*, Pls. S.36, S.65 and S. 66, for example.
28. *Ibid.*, Pls. S.62, S. S.68.
29. *Ibid.*, Pls. S. 62, S.67, S.68. for example.
30. *Ibid.*, Pls. D.14, D-19. S.19. S.19, to take some examples.
31. See the useful chapter on the spread of Islam in Kashmir, I, 75-116. Practically all accounts of Kashmir draw attention to famous saints like Bulbul Shah who converted Rinchan Shah, a number of Sayyids like Sayyid Jalaluddin of Bukhara, Sayyid Tajuddin, Sayyid Husain Simnani and the great Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani, all of whom were active in Kashmir in the 14th century. One also reads of the Muslim Rishis of Kashmir a great many of whom are mentioned in the historical accounts of Kashmir.
32. The popular sobriquet for Shah Sikandar was *But-Shikan*, 'the idol-breaker'. The upholding of orthodoxy by Sikandar, the imposition of *Jizya* on non-muslims, the ban on the application of *qashqa* or *tilak*, the destruction of some images and temples, is generally attributed to the advice given to the Sultan by Saif-ud-din, a new convert to Islam, who is referred to as the Sultan's evil genius. See, Mohibb-ul Hasan, 64-67. Hasan, however maintains that these 'iconoclastic activities have been greatly exaggerated'.
33. Zain-ul abidin's rule figures prominently in all account of Kashmir. For a useful, compact account, see Mohibb-ul Hasan, 71-95.
34. There is mention of the arts and crafts which had flourished in Hindu times having "greatly suffered in the chaos which lasted for over two hundred years preceding the establishment of the Sultanate. Besides, a large number of artists and craftsmen had perished in the course of Zulju's invasion". Mohibbul Hasan, 92. Zain-ul abidin is credited with reviving the old industries and introducing the new ones. With his reign, thus, are associated the arts of paper-making, book-binding, shawl-weaving, carpet-making, and the like.. "The great interest which Zain ul-abidin took in the development of arts and crafts is evident from the fact that if he came to know that an artist or a craftsman from Iraq, Khurasan, or Turkistan was on a visit to the Valley, he would induce him to teach his people whatever he knew. In fact, sometimes, the Sultan would not permit him to leave Kashmir until he had done so." *Idem.*
35. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 434.
36. There is an oblique reference to painting in Zain-ul-abidin's times, through the mention of one of the talented persons at his court, Jamil. "Jamil was not only a poet and a painter but also a musician, and sang beautifully in Persian". Mohibb-ul Hasan, 93. Among the men of letters at Zain-ul abidin's court is mentioned one Mansur, b. Muhammad who dedicated a work on medicine to Zain-ul abidin " to whose court he had been attracted by the widespread fame of his justice and liberality". This same person is mentioned as being "the author of the *Tashrih bit-taswir*, a treatise on the anatomy of the human body with illustrations which was dedicated to Mirza Pir Muhammad grandson of Timur". *Ibid.*, 89. This apart, there is no mention of painting in the Sultan's reign.
37. The list of men of distinction at Zain-ul abidin's court is truly long, Muslims and Hindus figuring in it alike. There is clear mention also of a translation bureau being established in which Persian works were translated into Sanskrit and Sanskrit works into Persian. "The Sultan was very fond of books and spent large sums of money in collecting them. Before his time, the number of Persian and Arabic manuscripts in Kashmir was very small. He, therefore, sent his agents to India, Persia, Iraq, and Turkistan to purchase them. In case their owners refused to sell them, his instructions were to secure their transcribed copies and pay the copyists generously." Mohibb-ul Hassan, 90-91.
38. Interspersed with accounts of the events of his times is Mirza Haider's 'description of Kashmir' in his *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, 424-30.

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39. *Ibid.*, 426.
40. Basil Gray, 1979 (b), 142.
41. Cited in Akimushkin and Ivanov, in Basil Gray, 1979 (A), 50.
42. Goetz, 1962-63, 61. The manuscript has fifteen illustrated folios and was written in A.H. 911 by Abul-Hasan ben Razavi.
43. These names are well known. Goetz, 1962-63. 61, speaks of the Kashmiris as belonging to the "second-strongest group in Akbar's studio. He also speculates about the painter Zain-ul abidin whose name figures among the illustrators of the Khan-i Khanan's *Ramayana* in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, also being possibly a Kashmiri "as that name was hardly in use outside Kashmir". For the Kashmiri painters at the Mughal court also see, Leach, 1986, 124.
44. *Idem.*
45. *Ibid.*, 131, fn.1.
46. Muhammad Husain is easily the most widely noticed of calligraphers at the Akbari court. Abul Fazl, *Ain.* I, 169, makes a most eloquent reference to him, stating that he had "surpassed his master Maulana Abul Aziz" and that "art-critics consider him equal to Mulla Mir Ali." For further references to Muhammad Husain Kashmiri's work, see, Shrivastava, 1985, 1-18.
47. Leach, 124.
48. *Ibid.*, 124-29. Leach's discussion of Nadir Samarqandi's work in the context of Kashmir is very detailed and stimulating.
49. *Ibid.*, 128.
50. *Ibid.*, 131. fn 5. Leach points out two folios, 15 and 16, in the Yusuf and Zuleikha manuscript which are possibly 'by late Kashmiri artists'.
51. *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, II, 145.
52. *Ibid.*, I, 113.
53. *Ibid.*, II, 150-51. Leach, 126-27 remarks : "Because of the context in which the statement is made, the remark may mean that Mansur and other artists who he (Jahangir) had brought in the royal party, did these wall paintings, though it would perhaps be even more interesting if the emperor were describing Kashmiri painters in this complimentary maner."
54. See, Leach, 124-31. Zafar Khan was the son of the distinguished grandee Khwaja Abul Hasan who had served as Prime Minister under the Emperor Jahangir, and also held office under Shah Jahan. There is a useful notice of Zafar Khan in the introduction to the *Shah Jahan Nama* of Inayat Khan, xxxv-xxvi. "In addition to being nobles, aristocrats, Zafar Khan and his son (Inayat Khan, the writer of the *Shah Jahan Nama*) also achieved some measure of fame as poets, under their respective pen-names of 'Ahsan' and 'Ashna'. Under Shah-Jahan, Zafar Khan twice held the office of Governor of Kashmir, where he was a patron of both poets and painters, and where he constructed a beautiful garden called Bagh-Zafarabad, which Shah Jahan once honoured with a royal visit". Zafar Khan's pension amounted to Rs.40,000 annually (approximately equivalent to 400,000 dollars in today's currency) which continued until his death in 1073/1663, during Aurangzeb's sixth regnal year. There is an illustrated manuscript of Zafar Khan's *Mathnavi* in the Royal Asiatic Society, London. (No. 203), which "contains two paintings depicting Zafar Khan, and apparently his son Inayat Khan also, being honoured by an audience with Shah Jahan in two different Kashmir gardens'. *Ibid.*, XXV, fn. 42.
55. Reproduced in Leach, 130.
56. *Ibid.*, 130-31.
57. See, Losty, 141-42, No. 125. The manuscript is described and discussed at considerable length.
58. *Ibid.*, 142.
59. *Ibid.*, 142-43.
60. Taranath, 348.
61. *Idem.*
62. See *infra*, in the section on manuscripts, for some examples.
63. Bamzai, 1962. There is a reference in Damodaragupta's *Kuttanimata-Kavya*, a Kashmiri work of the eighth century, to painting being one of the subjects which Kashmiri women had to learn and cultivate.
64. *Idem.*
65. *Idem.*

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66. See, B.N. Goswamy, 1961, for a long list of persons interviewed in the course of field-work, with whom Kashmiri manuscripts, illuminated and illustrated, were seen in the Pahari area and in the foot-hills of the Punjab.
67. T.N. Dhar, formerly of the Kashmir University, now at Shimla, mentioned this fact to me. He has a vivid recollection of this evidently the practice was continuing well into the second-half of this century.
68. Sender, 22.
69. *Idem.*
70. Pandit Anand Koul, 1924, appends an impressive list of Kashmiri scholars from the Pandit community; Bamzai, 1962, similarly lists many Kashmiri pandits who attained great distinction in their chosen fields. Sender has different chapters on the Kashmiri pandits who distinguished themselves at the Mughal court, the Lahore darbar, in Awadh and Delhi.
71. The number of Kashmiri pandits who excelled at Persian, and collected works in the language, must have been truly large. The authorship of several histories of Kashmir in Persian is credited to Pandits like Narayan Koul, Birbal Kachroo and others. Rattan Nath Sarshar, author of the Urdu classic *Fasana-i Azad*, was also a Kashmiri, Diwan Ajudhya Prasad of Lahore was an avid collector of works in Persian. These are but a few examples. See, Anand Koul, 1924, 96-98.
72. Accession No. 2981, 2982, 2983. The panels are now mounted in sections and do not possess the look of a *torana* now. But it is easy to see that they belonged to one.
73. Losty, 119-20.
74. Adamova and Greck, 70-1.
75. *Ibid.*, No.1, Pls. 1-6.
76. *Ibid.*, 80, No. 13. An *ex-libris* of the Tsar Nicholas II is pasted on the fly-leaf at the end of this manuscript.
77. Srivastava, 1987, 3. Also see S.P. Srivastava, 1991, 105.
78. This volume was formerly in the collection of the library attached to the Raghunath temple at Jammu, and has only recently been acquired by the National Museum. See, *infra,* in the sections on manuscripts and paintings.
79. Some of these works are drawn attention to *infra,* in the sections on manuscripts and paintings.
80. The Dogra Art Gallery at Jammu has, among other things, some painted doors which show a clear merging of the Pahari and the Kashmiri styles.
81. National Museum, accession Nos. 59.1551. See. infra, p. 52 in the sections on manuscripts and paintings.
82. Rishi, 1977. Attention is drawn in this interesting article to a large number of other manuscripts in Punjab, now in Persian collections and transcribed at places like Astrakhan, Bukhara, and Samarqand by Punjabi scribes settled there.
83. See, Karuna Goswamy, 1988; also *infra,* Chapter IV, p. 70.

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Chapter Three

THE FLOWERING: STYLE

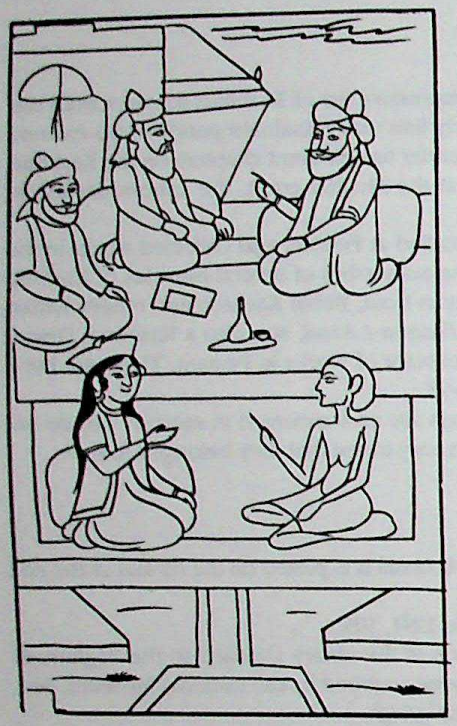

Fig.1 Example of Iranate work. Leaf from a *Diwan* of Hafiz.

Extant evidence suggests that Kashmiri paintings, as seen in illustrated manuscripts of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, fall into five major groups.

These paintings occur in:

(a) Persian manuscripts,[1] mostly classical, poetical texts, written generally in *nastaliq* characters;

(b) Persian manuscripts of texts translated or paraphrased in prose from Sanskrit classics treating of Hindu themes, also written generally in *nastaliq* characters;

(c) Sanskrit manuscripts, in Devanagari or Sharada characters, mostly of ritual texts, bound generally in a horizontal *pothi* format, in small *gutka* sizes;

(d) Persian manuscripts of classical texts in prose or poetry, usually different in style and palette from manuscripts of groups (a) and (b) above, and generally answering to the description, 'Afghan-Kashmiri'. (Goetz's 'Mughal-Afghanistani'); and

(e) Punjabi manuscripts in Gurmukhi characters, chiefly devoted to Sikh themes but including Punjabi translations or versions of classical Sanskrit or Hindi texts.

Work in all these five groups can be attributed to Kashmiri painters and scribes. Many of them come from known Kashmiri collections; others have intrinsic information on their Kashmiri origins; still others seem to have been produced by Kashmiri artists and scribes settled or temporarily working in areas outside of Kashmir but are noticeably Kashmiri in stylistic affiliation. This is not to suggest that there is a monolithic Kashmiri style of painting, but a careful consideration of evidence enables one to identify a distinctive "maintream" manner that almost defines the style to which many variants or sub-styles can be related. This mainstream style is best represented by the works in the first two groups which are also numerically the largest, and it is this that sets Kashmiri work apart from the other major styles of Indian painting like the Mughal, the Pahari, the Rajasthani, or the Deccani. It is useful therefore to first describe and analyse the principal features of this style.

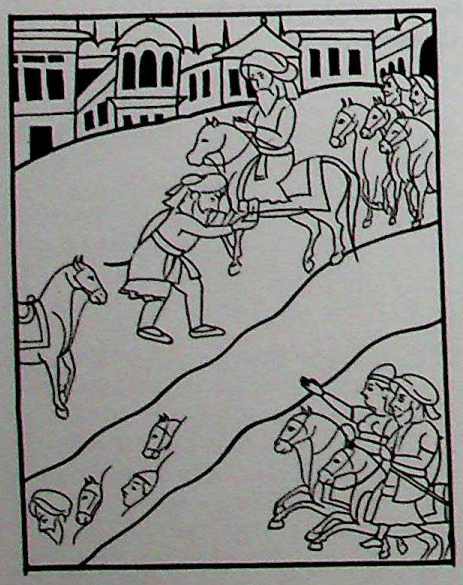

Fig.3 Example of work in the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' idiom.

Not all the work in this style, it needs to be stated, was confined to bound-books; single folios were also painted; at the same time not all of it was done by equally skilled craftsmen. Considering that the contents of the works in these two groups are very different, one is tempted initially to think of a Kashmiri 'Muslim' and a Kashmiri 'Hindu' style.[2] But this classification in the context of Kashmir would be clearly inappropriate. Neither in respect of the community to which patrons of such works belonged, nor of the painters and scribes who were involved in making them, is it possible to see a clear division. There is little doubt that in the centuries to which Kashmiri painting relates, Persian was as wide-spread and as well loved among Hindus as it was among Muslims. The rate of literacy in Kashmir may not have been very high, but wherever there was fondness for learning, among the Muslims as well as the Hindus – among the latter especially those of the *Karkun* class – classics of Persian literature were read and admired. Copies of the *Diwan* of Hafiz, the *Kulliyat* of Sadi, or the *Khamsa* of Nizami were as liable or likely to be commissioned by a Muslim merchant or court functionary as by a Hindu official of the state. Only in one respect, that of patronage, can a small distinction perhaps be made; it is likely that Sanskrit works, even in their Persian versions, were chiefly of interest to Hindu

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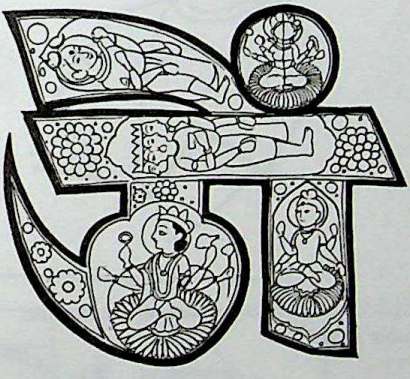

Fig.2 Example of illustration of a Sanskrit text.

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Fig.5 Conventional rendering of a Muslim noble lady.

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Fig.4 Conventional rendering of a Muslim courtier.

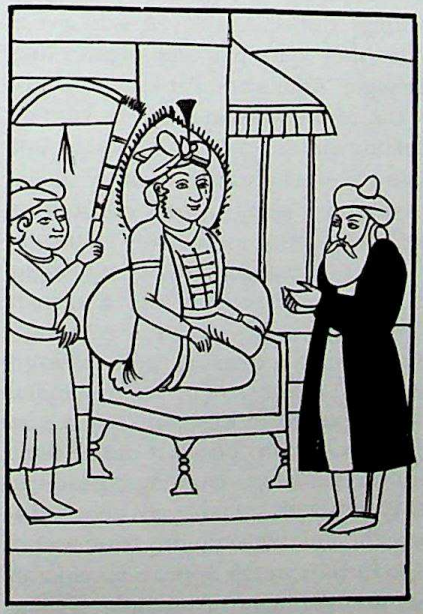

Fig.6 Typical composition of a scene based on a Persian poetic text such as by Hafiz, Sadi or Nizami.

patrons; a Muslim court official or merchant can only with some difficulty be envisaged as being interested in a manuscript of the *Mahabharata* or the *Bhagavata Purana*.[3] This situation is slightly different from that obtaining at the Mughal court, where, following the example set by Akbar. Muslim princes and grandees did devote themselves to the study of Hindu classics. Besides the Emperor, who commissioned a great *Ramayana* series or a *Mahabharata* or a *Jog-Vashishtha* manuscript, the Khan-i-Khanan was, for example, equally interested.[4] This said, however, it needs to be reiterated that among the painters and scribes in Kashmir, no specialisation in Muslim or Hindu texts can be visualised. Hindu texts in Persian translation were seemingly as often painted by Muslim painters as by those who came from the Hindu community.

In its essentials, the style may well have approximated, initially, to the kinds in which pictures were painted in Persian manuscripts at centres like, say, Shiraz or Bukhara. The highest quality of work done there may only rarely have come to Kashmir, but routine quality works from there were likely to have been widely known in Kashmir and circulated among the literati.[5] These were marked by relatively simple and direct compositions; a limited amount of architecture; summary treatment of landscape; a few figures predictably disposed or distributed over the page; a limited amount of ornamental detail; a somewhat literal interpretation of the subject or the mood of the verse that was meant to be illustrated. Details were kept to the minimum, and the emphasis was on clarity, recognisability, accuracy of 'iconographic' rendering.[6] Thus the painter often thought in terms of types, of stock images, of formula-based visualisation of situations, Clear types seem to have been evolved, so that a poet, a mullah, a sufi, a drunkard, a king, a courtier, a warrior, a courtesan, a maid, a duenna, to take some examples, could be instantly recognised. In the rendering of landscapes or architecture, again, the emphasis was on the reader's imagined need to comprehend a situation or a setting both clearly and quickly. The approach taken by the Persian painters of these works was apparently taken over by the painters of Kashmir. Here too, standard compositions were quickly worked out.[7] One sees again and again scenes like those of courtiers attending on a king, with everyone in his appointed place; the chamber, terrace, fountains, canopy, garden, all properly and briefly indicated; or, the setting of a garden party with drinkers and musicians and poets reciting in the open, surrounded by a few cypresses and a few flowering bushes; Khusrau coming upon Shirin bathing, and halting briefly, astonished at her beauty; lovers embracing while maids stood at a distance in another part of the palace, waiting to be called in; a poet with his beloved. reciting to her from his works, Sulaiman seated in all his glory with *paris* and *jinns* and animals all in attendance; sufis breaking out into esctatic dance; Yusuf appearing at Zuleikha's palace dazzling everyone with his beauty; and so on. Figures or passages in these compositions could be used by the painters almost like building blocks, one character taken out of one context and placed in a materially different one to make an entirely different composition; fountains shifted from one location to another; canopies and awnings switched from right to left or the other way around; interiors placed in the lower half of the painting or the upper half. Even more: the scene of Khusrau coming upon Shirin bathing could be used in one manuscript to 'illustrate' a *ghazal* of Hafiz, and in another to illustrate an utterance of Sadi's. The painter's repertoire was extensive, and additions and alterations to it were constantly made. However, profusely illustrated as many of these manuscripts were, once the range of paintings within one manuscript had been seen, it was almost possible to predict what to expect in another manuscript whether of the same text, or another. This predictability applied of course only as long as the works were of roughly the same category, relating to classical works of poetry, like those of Hafiz or Rumi or Sadi or Nizami.

In the *Shahnama* of Firdausi, which had attained such resounding popularity in the Persian-speaking world which included Kashmir, the cast of characters was

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Fig.7 Conventional rendering of the well-known scene of Rustam battling the White Div, from Firdausi's *Shahnama*.

Fig.9 Figure drawn from Hindu mythological sources: Shiva with the Ganga issuing forth from his locks.

Fig.11 Treatment of the five-heads of the Goddess Sharada, derived from early iconographic models.

different and much larger but in this, again, iconographies of different scenes, and of characters were clearly established, obviously after Persian models. Rustam was easy to recognise, so were the White Div or Akwan Div or Zal or Ghayumars or Zuhhak. In manuscript after manuscript of the *Shahnama*, it is possible to see Rustam tearing open the heart of the white Div inside a cave; Rustam battling Sohrab and subduing him; Rustam rescuing Bizhan from the dungeon of the well; Siyavush going through the fire ordeal; the black Div bodily lifting the rock on which Rustam is asleep; Rakhsh killing the lion with his bare hooves, and so on. Not only are the episodes selected for illustration much the same: the compositions in many cases are also indentical. Sometimes, when the range of illustrations shrinks one gets the feeling that the painters made their own judgements about what to bring in and what to exclude depending upon the cost that a patron was willing to bear : thus the white Div was retained but the black Div left out; Zal and the Simurgh kept but the hunting of the dragon omitted, etc. One speaks here not of the quality of the painted work, or the quality and quantity of illumination in the manuscript—these could vary very greatly—but only of the method followed, and the choices exercised by the painters. One is reminded strongly of the situation obtaining in seventeenth century Shiraz where, assembly-line fashion, illustrated manuscripts looking much like each other could be ordered or obtained by the hundred.[8] The inspiration, the models, the feeling in these Kashmiri manuscripts of Persian classical texts were largely Iranian. The painters made conscious references often to the Iranian context of the works in their illustrations, while rendering details of costumes, furnishings, elements of decoration etc: references in other words to Iran and thus to original Iranian work.

In this situation, manuscripts belonging to the second group, Sanskrit texts of Hindu themes like the epics, the Puranas etc., rendered in Persian, must have initially posed problems to the painters. This, because the subjects, the characters involved, the iconographies, the temporal context of the events, were very different from Iranian work. If the early Kashmiri painters inspired by Iranate work were Muslims – Hindu painters treating of those very manuscripts seem to come in later – they must have needed help, when called upon to paint Hindu themes, in working out details like establishing a repertoire; settling iconographies; deciding upon appropriate settings, furnishings etc. so as to give a proper, ancient 'Hindu' look to the scenes that they were painting. Figures like those of Shiva or Krishna, the Goddess or the sages, Arjuna and Parikshit, Bharata and Hanuman would ordinarily have been out of the Muslim painter's ken, as also warriors in chariots, monkey-hordes wielding maces, snakes wishing to burn themselves in sacred fires.[9] It could also not have been easy to portray multi-headed figures like those of Ravana, or Sadashiva; many-armed warriors or Vishnu-Krishna subsuming wihin himself the entire universe. There is, predictably, no record of how these repertoires and iconographies were worked out, but it would seem as if, in their search, the Muslim painters turned to such earlier Hindu or Buddhist models as had survived in popular ritualistic paintings. These private, domestic paintings must have retained a memory, perhaps even some specific details, of icons and compositions in the ancient tradition of mural paintings and painted book-covers, as it once existed in Kashmir. To take an example: when it comes to representing figures with many heads, it can be done in a variety of ways. But when one sees, in miniature paintings, heads of Sadashiva or the goddess Sharada arranged in tiers with lateral heads attached at various levels to a vertical column of heads, the link between this treatment of poly-cephalic figures[10] and those seen in the Ladakh murals appears remarkably strong.[11] Again, in Kashmiri manuscripts the treatment of multiple arms as fanning out from the elbows instead of from the shoulders, stands out very sharply; and this convention of one pair of upper arms often sustaining a set of twenty-four arms or so – puts one immediately in mind of the gigantic stucco

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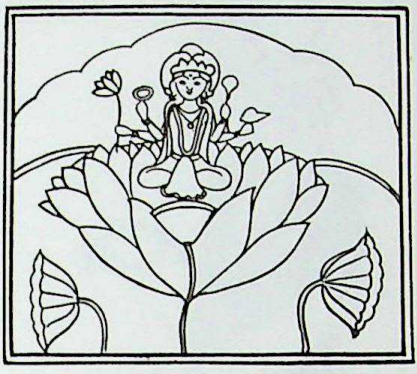

Fig.8 Figure drawn from Hindu mythological sources: Vishnu seated on a lotus.

Fig.10 Multi-headed and multi-armed figure of eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara. From Alchi, Ladakh.

Fig.12 Sadashiva, with many heads and multiple arms (issuing forth from the elbows), derived from early iconographic models.

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Fig.14 A winged pari, often seen in illustrations of Persian and other poetic texts.

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Fig.13 Male type often seen in illustrations of Persian poetic texts.

Fig.15 Typical rendering of a Kashmiri Pandit, seen wearing a *kantop*-head covering.

Fig.16 Muslim characters seen dressed in typical *qabas* and *pairahans*.

figures of Bodhisattvas inside the Sumtsek at Alchi or the painted Taras and Avalokiteshvaras at that and other places in Ladakh.[12] These early iconographic models are likely to have come to the painters filtered through later work on wood or paper, but visually the relationship is almost impossible to miss. A lot of borrowing from an older tradition of painting can be taken for granted.

The process that can be visualised is interesting. When types had to be worked out, on the pattern of types that occur in manuscripts of Persian classics, both observation and imagination must have been brought into play in the illustration of Sanskrit classics in Persian versions. When Hindu painters joined the ranks, some interaction must have resulted. Some consultation with learned and discerning patrons may also have ensued. It is in this fashion that a recognisable mainstream of Kashmiri painting must have emerged. In this mainstream, stylistically little difference can be established between works of Muslim or Hindu content eventually. A Kashmiri style is what emerged, drawing as it did from widely different sources. In the hands of the Kashmiri painters of these centuries, much that was divergent was homogenised, and an identity fashioned. This is not to say that to this style, in all its breadth, belongs a dead uniformity. Family workshops must have worked out their own preferred idioms or conventions even when colour schemes and little iconographic details remained unchanged from generation to generation. A few things which stand out as elements in the mainstream style and which ultimately help to define it and establish its contours, need to be drawn attention to here.[13]

Among the features that strike one immediately in Kashmiri painting is the range of colours that the painter employs. In some way one is prepared for this, by the magnificence of colours that the shawls, the carpets and the decoration of papier-mache work of Kashmir possess. The illuminators and the painters of manuscripts had in their own fashion lived with this very world of colours in which the chromatic range of reds seems to dominate. There is even a preoccupation with the names of colours in this range, each with a resonance of its own in the Persian-Islamic world: names like *gulali, gulanari, gulabi, kirmizi, piazi, uda*. These names do not only occur again and again in Persian poetry and the language of every day parlance; they seem to have held a special attraction for the painters of Kashmir surrounded as they were, almost day and night, by the infinite variations of pink and in the subtle tints of red and orange that sunsets in the mountainous regions have a way of being steeped in. As a result, pinks, lilacs, purples, violets, oranges, reds, crimsons and scarlets light these pictures up. One sees them everywhere: discreetly outlining the petals of lotuses that spread under the seats of deities; in *peshwazes* that women elegantly wear; in the *qabas* and *jamas* of men; in carpets that spread out from end to end of a terrace; in wooden structures of chariots; in cloth-screens that are neatly rolled up and tied inside arched openings; in the strips of land directly below shimmering blue skies. In one painter's hand lotuses retain their white colour, with only the rims of the petals delicately tinged with pink and the bases with purple; in another painter's hand they take on a pink-violet colour on their entire bodies with the edges of the petals shaded a little darker.[14] The gold-spotted dresses of some men and women are a graceful light orange; at other times they turn into crimson or scarlet. It is in fact difficult to think of many Kashmiri paintings in which these hues and shades do not appear.

There is none of the gossamer thin appearence that very delicately tinted draperies possess in Pahari paintings; nor is that subtle mixing of colours to be seen. But, through sheer imaginativeness, the Kashmiri painters are able to achieve lively, variegated effects using only a limited number of colours, set off by a consistent, if not always discreet, spread of gold in dresses, objects, trimmings etc. Of blue, there are few shades: the sky is nearly always painted a flat ultramarine with thin streaks of clouds seen against it. A distinctive moss green is again what painters have a fondness for. Yellows are used to advantage,

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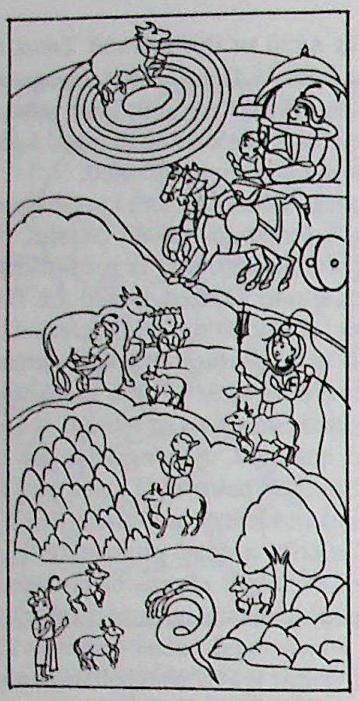

Fig.17 Typical rendering of planes, and the careful singling out of figures.

Fig.18 The Goddess Durga: female figure rendered under Pahari influence.

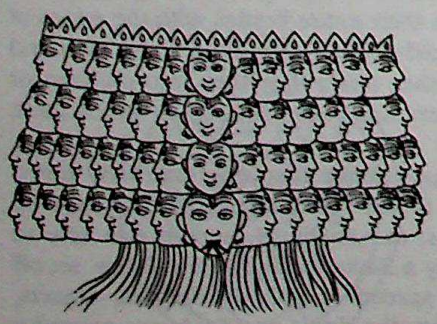

Fig.19 Multiple heads, summarily drawn, in a rendering of the Vishwarupa.

mixed with reds, orange, greens, as the painter's fancy would dictate. It is with this palette, and with a range of whites and blacks that the painter achieves his colourful, sometimes a trifle over-stated, effect.

The range of colours apart, what one notices is their distribution over the page, especially in the backgrounds. A flat, monochromatic background is seldom aimed at by the painter. Frequently—in outdoor scenes almost invariably—the background was filled with uneven, undulating areas coloured flat, rims rising and then dipping again: no two areas look exactly alike. These arrangements rise from below in waves of flat colour, or patches that meet and intersect till one reaches the very top where, almost always, room is left for a patch of blue to indicate the vault of the sky above.[15] There seems to be no fixed order in which these background bands and strips are aranged in respect of colour: greens might be topped by reds or oranges, and then topped again by green or purples, for example. Evidently it is not only a variegated effect in the background that the painter sets out to achieve: his intention is different. The aim seems to be to establish different planes through this device. With colours advancing or receding—in the best thought-out of works—startling effects of a kind of perspective emerging are sometimes achieved through this device. Seldom does the artist show any interest in rendering recession in space. Ordinarily, there is not even the pretence of an attempt at establishing linear perspective. Several objects are viewed as if directly from above, following an old convention; there is very little oversecting. This device of establishing planes through the use of areas of different colours therefore serves an extremely useful purpose: with very simple means the painter is able to lead the viewer into the painting, making him register the fact that things are not all happening on the same plane or in the same space: they are separated out; some in front, others at the back, and so on.

In the placing of figures, one frequently notices the artist's clear preference for singling figures out and allocating to each its own space on the page, wherever he can manage it and the scene permits of it. This is not to say that there are no groups of people, or that figures appear psychologically unrelated to each other through being rendered in isolation, or that there is no oversecting. But the artist's predilection is clear. Doing things differently may not have been beyond his reach, but this device somehow makes for simplicity, clarity, a lack of clutter. Purely practically, it may have been easier for him to render things this way, too. One discerns at times an overall complexity in the composition, but this results from factors other than from the way the figures are arranged. If a group of holy men are shown seated around a sacred fire, to take an example, they are all separated out—bodies, seats, objects held in hand—clearly, as if slightly distanced from each other, etched against the flat coloured background. When an army is on the march, soldiers can be made out as being separately conceived and rendered with the minimal amount of oversecting in the area of the legs. When horsemen take to the field, each of them occupies a distinct, personal space. There are times when the artist cannot help showing figures very close to each other—lovers embracing, horses yoked to the same chariot, warriors grappling with each other—but of this there is not a great deal. One clearly gets the sensation that the artist is happy to return at the first opportunity to rendering figures separated out, slightly distanced, from each other.

The figures in most Kashmiri painting are generally quite summarily drawn with no attempt on the painter's part to bring out the extraordinary possiblities of the human body with all its grace, flexibility, variety and subtlety. In this he is very unlike the Pahari painter who delights in the human form and its countless attitudes and flexions. Not everything in Kashmiri painting is stiff and frozen: there are stances, gestures, at time even expressions, that change according to the context, but much is strictly iconographic, and not informed by the joy that a painter might derive in rendering the human figure. Faces, apart from bodies, rarely reflect, as they are rendered, any involvement with character. Everything is

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Fig.20 Conventional rendering of a female figure, with no emphasis on breasts.

established through externals like dress, stance, and position inside a group. No modelling is attempted in most of the work with the result that there is no suppleness or sense of volume that give the viewer the sensation of relating to a form. In this respect, the murals of Alchi with their subtle modelling, their warm treatment of the flesh, their sensuous stances and gestures, have been all but forgotten. One almost gets the feeling that the painter does not wish to become involved in the persons that he renders, the only exception being the suprahuman or the sub-human figures that he occasionally brings in: demons, *paris* and the like.

In respect of the treatment of the female body, the painter's reluctance to trace its contours carefully, to bring out the femininity of figures, is very marked. He goes often to the extent of suppressing the area of the breasts; no fleshly charms are even hinted at.[16] This might derive in part from the Persian tradition where, at places, an almost deliberate ambiguity is employed, a little like in Persian poetry where the beloved could be a woman or a young boy, judging from the verses. Were it not for the dresses that women wear in illustrations of Persian classic poems, or the thin wavy locks that fall along the temple, the difference between a feminine figure and a young boy may be hard to make out.

It is possible to see in this a symptom. Drawing in Kashmiri work is as a rule devoid of vitality: the line is not infirm but somehow lacks in life. That elegant shift of pressure on the brush that the Pahari painter so skilfully uses, creating a wonderful fluidity, one misses in Kashmiri painting. One notices this not only in figural drawing but also in the line used generally by the Kashmiri painter. To take an analogy from the field of music, his drawing is akin to the *sapat taans* that some singers take. There is competence, even an understanding of the human form, but no real delight in it. This stems possibly from the routine kind of Persian work which may have inspired Kashmiri painting in the beginning, and if one starts noticing a change, it is only under Pahari influence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Then, one comes occasionally upon lively images like Vishnu recumbent on Shesha, or the Goddess taking on an army of demons, which step out of the rather rigid framework of figural drawing with which the painters often, or routinely, seem to have worked.

Fig.21 Conventional rendering of a standing woman, with an avoidance of emphasis on femininity.

A remarkable feature of Kashmiri painting is the almost complete lack of interest in portraiture of any kind. One would have to strain really hard to locate likenesses in it, for it is 'types' that the painter essentially works with. Women's portraits, like elsewhere, are not even to be expected in this style, but even in the renderings of men despite their being probably meant to be identifiable, like devotee-figures adoring an *ishta*, there is no real individuation. Even the kind of *lakshana*-marked portraits that we encounter in Rajput painting both of Rajasthan and the hills,[17] are missing. When we see Sodhi Bhan Singh offering homage to Mahakala[18] or adoring the *Vishvarupa*, there is no feeling that one gets of a real person, the individual being essentially defined by the dress he wears or the beard he sports. When the great Gurus are rendered, all the emphasis is on iconography through which they can be easily located or identified. At no place does one get a painting of a single figure that is even intended, or proclaimed by its caption, to be a portrait of a real person. It is difficult to explain this. In some manuscripts of Persian classics, notionally, the poets are 'portrayed' but in fact the figures of Hafiz and Sadi are interchangeable : even their iconography is not differentiated. The same long white beard, the same flowing *qaba*, the same full turban, serves for both. It is not Hafiz or Sadi that the painter renders, therefore, but a poet in generic terms. In the illustrations of Hindu texts, again, hardly any portraits of patrons, royal figures etc. are to be seen.

The principal, even the predominant concern of the painter appears to be design. Nearly all things are conceived as elements in a design: men, women, vehicles, animals, furnishings, landscape, and architecture included. The painter's approach is not materially different from that of a *naqqash* who sat down to work

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out attractive designs, and arrangements and colour schemes for shawls, carpets or pen-cases. This is possibly taking a harsh view of Kashmiri painting, but this reluctance to become involved in individuals, in relationships, in the psychological aspects of human beings, could be seen as defining the terms on which the painter needs and expects to be understood. Emotion plays little role in this, and if the viewer is moved by the grandeur of a design, as in the case of the *Vishvarupa* in the collection of the National Museum Delhi,[19] or by the inventiveness of the painter in working out a subtle variation upon a known theme, the excitement is of an intellectual rather than an emotional kind. Very few Kashmiri works can be cited which have the visceral power of evoking emotion that some Rajput, even Mughal, works possess. At the same time it can be said perhaps that a certain delight can be experienced through the wonderful sense of design, or the manipulation of colour, in Kashmiri works. Clearly this applies not to routine work, but to exceptional works that excel even while staying within the same, known frame of reference.

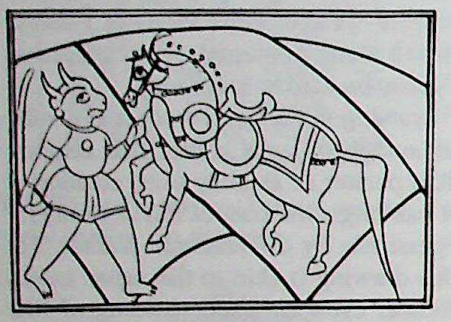

Fig.22 Different planes, summarily rendered.

In respect of designs, one notices the painter's eagerness to bring patterns in everywhere : in architectural decoration, in carpets and furnishings, in dresses and small objects of use. Interestingly, however, here no inferences can be drawn about the styles of families, about workshops, or about individuãls, simply on the basis of the richness or otherwise, the vitality or lack of it, of designs in various groups of paintings or illustrated manuscripts. This is so because it seems as if a great deal was governed by considerations of costs. Unlike in other regions or in other schools of paintings, one does not ordinarily think of Kashmiri painters as being retained artists in a permanent or semi-permanent relationship with their patrons.[20] One does not see them as drawing regular salaries, or as long settled upon pieces of land given in perpetuity to them.[21] The essence of the relationship between patrons and Kashmiri painters comprised of a cash exchange. Commissions were assigned, payments were made on the completion of work, and the relationship more or less came to an end at least till the time that the next commission followed. It is conceivable in this situation that the same painter or group of painters could change from a richly textured and patterned rendering in one manuscript to very cursorily rendered patterns in another. Clearly, while some skills must have been beyond the reach of some painters, it is not easy to form a judgement about the painters' skills only on the basis of the quality of work in a given manuscript. The time taken in the execution of a work was a serious consideration for groups working in the fashion described. The level of work and the attention to detail could vary considerably in the same hands.

Some conventions, even though not consistently followed in all manuscripts or in all categories of work, seem to stand out. While an inventory is not intended here, it is of interest to take note of a few things. The establishment of different planes through the use of different, uneven areas of that colour, and a general lack of interest in establishing elaborate backgrounds have been noticed above. Colours to demarcate different territories or settings strike one as a remarkable feature, and the persistence of this convention in various forms is notable. In the finer manuscripts, the undulations can be gentle, the colours can be filled with care and chosen with intelligence. In the late, 'bazaar' type of manuscripts, the backgrounds tend to be treated in coarsely demarcated triangular areas of different colours. The effect is quite different, but the convention survives and serves clearly as a guide to the painter.

In battle scenes, in many Kashmiri works, following Persian models from Shiraz and other centres, behind the uppermost curve denoting a hill or a similar topographical feature, men are frequently shown half-hidden by the hill, opposing groups disposed on either side, facing each other. The groups are generally quite small—three or four persons—but when they carry triangular banners, or pennants, they are to be interpreted as representing contingents of armies about to face each other on the field of battle. The principal part of the

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Fig.23 Opposing armies indicated behind hilltops, as derived from Persian work.

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Fig.24 Typical rendering of *ayudhas* held lightly in the hands or placed atop them.

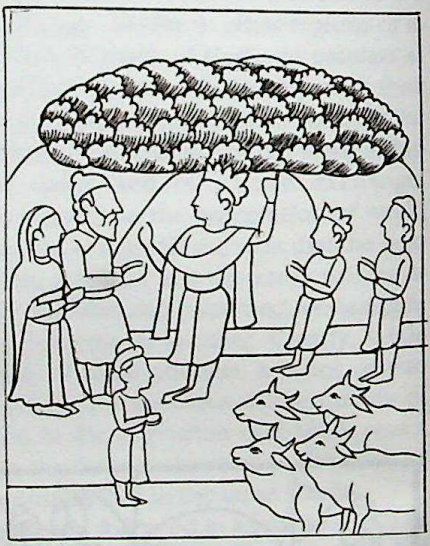

Fig.26 Conventional treatment of rocks from a rendering of Krishna holding aloft the mount Govardhana.

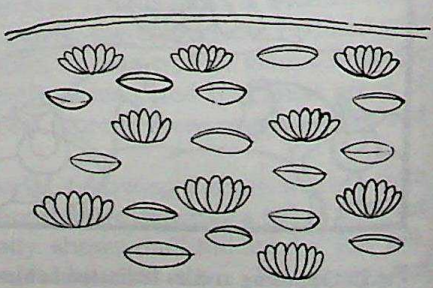

Fig.28 Conventional rendering of lotuses in water.

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Fig.25 A Brahmin priest's hands appearing cupped, 'Muslim-fashion', even though intended to be shown as joined in adoration.

Fig.27 Sectional-cut rendering of a well, affording a double-view.

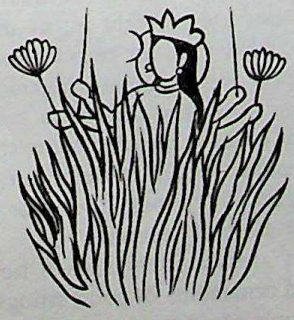

Fig.29 Conventional rendering of fire.

action takes place in the foreground or in the middle of the picture. As a rule, the pennants on both sides are so held that their pointed ends face towards the army at the back; what is thus shown is not their fluttering in the wind for in the same wind different pennants will not flutter in different directions: the painter here is engaged in producing an image of opposing armies, and not in rendering the strength or the direction of the wind. Again, the 'armies' behind the hill are often painted on a scale and in colours that make them come within very close distance of the main actors, reminding one sharply of the scenes at Alchi where figures similiarly placed at the back, half hidden from view, seem to be capable almost of reaching out and touching the principal figures in the main field of the painting.

As pointed out before, the conventions for the rendering of multiple heads in tiers and in different colours, as also for the rendering of multiple arms fanning out from the elbow with one pair of upper arms supporting ten pairs or more of fore-arms,[22] remain among the most enduring of the features of Kashmiri painting. Once one becomes alerted or sensitive to this, one picks up the detail very quickly almost everywhere in Kashmiri painting.[23] The treatment is unmistakable, and seems to go back to as early a period of time as the murals at Alchi in Ladakh.[24] The iconic tradition survived for centuries possibly through the continuance of these conventions within painted ritual and sacred manuscripts.

In the more routine manuscripts of the seventeenth century and afterwards, the manner of holding the objects in the hands, *ayudhas* and weapons of different kinds for example, is very distinctive. The objects often rest lightly upon the thumb and forefinger of the extended hand, appearing not to be held or grasped properly.[25] As in the treatment of the multiple arms, the key consideration is obviously not the functionality of a feature like this, but only emblematic value. In general the hands are very cursorily treated. Even in Hindu texts, when the hands are meant to be shown as joined, palm against palm, in adoration, they are often seen held as if lightly cupped together, Muslim fashion, at the time of offering a prayer or seeking a favour.

This is so even when the devotees are placed in a Hindu context. Rocks in Kashmiri painting are generally conceived as bare and close-set with curves of different kinds being placed upon other curves. There is a distant memory of Persian rocks in this conventional treatment but slowly the relationship with Iranate work becomes very slight and one sees piles of rocks, not insubstantial in size, without texture, smooth like pebbles. When mountains are brought in, those that house large caves, or those where the devas reside, they range from simple smooth rock-formations to spreading, rising purple and pink shapes heaped together giving the impression very often of wrinkled lotus-petals artificially arranged. When Vishnu as Varaha lifts the earth out of the waters (see, P.57) or Prithu sits down to milk the earth-cow in front of a mountain, this is the colourful, unearthly vision of a mountain that we see. When the painter boldly sets the action inside a cave, or a well, he unhesitatingly produces a sectional cut in the surface, renders the ground a dark grey to suggest depth or 'interior'; he makes no attempt at starting from outside and gradually darkening the interior. Very often from a perfect bright coloured landscape outside, one suddenly finds oneself treated to a large patch of grey against which the action is set: Bizhan hanging in the well dungeon; Bhasmasura pursuing Shiva inside the cave; Rustam subduing the White Div in a cave again. The device brings Persian and Mughal sources to the mind.

One notices several other things. As a matter of rule, for example, water is treated as a flat, unmoving mass of silver-grey in which lotuses and lotus leaves grow in fair profusion as though in a placid lake. Fire is generally seen iconically with spiky flames, straight and pointed, rising upwards, perhaps drawing upon some memory of the iconographic, prescription of rendering fire as seven-tongued, *saptajivha,* each tongue bearing a different name, and not as a leaping, licking mass of flames. The sky is usually an ultramarine blue with small wisps of

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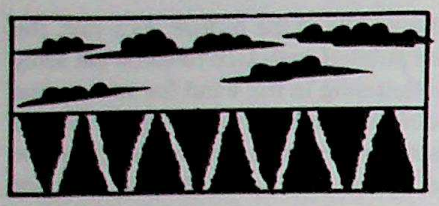

Fig.30 One of the conventions used in the rendering of a sky.

Fig.31 Typical rendering of horses yoked to a chariot.

Fig.32 Conventional rendering of horses with bodies and legs overlapping.

cloud, thin and white, that edge the horizon, or run as streaks across the sky, together occasionally with an uneven gold line to mark lightning. No skies threaten in these paintings; the heavens are not crowded with moisture-laden shapes. When one sees chariots in these paintings – Krishna and Arjuna on the battle field; Prithu taking to war; Rama advancing towards Ravana – one notices that the wheels are always shown solid, and the body of the chariot is lightly placed atop the wheels, the painters seeing no difficulty in the functioning of these wheels. There is no understanding of, or at least no interest in showing, the structure as it could have functioned. It turns simply into a motif, a design.

In the many horses that one sees yoked to chariots, it is possible to notice a very distinctive treatment. As a rule there are two horses and, seen from the side as they are, their bodies overlap considerably; the painter, while routinely painting the lower part of the legs and the tails red – as if dyed, following an early Indian, Rajput custom – shows the hind legs of the horses firmly grounded and the further forelegs lifted as if breaking into a gallop. It is not easy to tell which leg belongs to which horse, and the painter often confuses the issue by painting the forelegs of the further horse lifted into the air, and of the nearer horse planted on the ground, in disregard of the consequences that this would have, were this to happen in real life. Once again one notices a convention hardened and become persistent, its original form lost and forgotten.

The design of the chariot in Kashmiri works is again distinctive and easily recognisable; the structures of the double roofs over the heads of the rider and the charioteer, who are thus boxed in their own respective areas, looking like two separate canopies, often treated at the base in a lotus-petal pattern. The orange-red canopies topped by golden finials then rise, in simulation of *chhatras* held over the heads of royal or divine personages. Here, these domes are clearly attached to the structures, something not necessarily seen in the parasol *chhatras* that often simply levitate in the air.

The painter's concern with grounding his figures, as noticed before, is quite minimal and, frequently, against flat coloured backgrounds, horses, elephants. chariots and men all seem more or less floating but looking quite comfortable in that position. A feeling of weightlessness belongs to them. In the treatment of architecture when the painter shows a brief, frontally-seen loggia at the back of a terrace – a common sight in Kashmiri painting – the roofs are flat, the walls minimally decorated with floral work. The doors and windows are rendered a flat grey to indicate the dark interior. The curtains are rolled up and tied, and very often a brightly coloured awning or canopy, somewhat billowy, is attached to the wall of the chamber and rendered as if seen in profile. Interestingly, the painter seems to be very concerned with ropes and strings that hold this and other structures together, always using a thin white rule to indicate a string etc. One notices this repeatedly in the tying of awnings, in rolled-up curtains, in the lasso with which Rustam brings the Khaqan of China down from his elephant, in the tethering of Rakhsh to a tree or a peg. Suddenly, the artist shows a strong interest in providing a 'logical' explanation of the way things work. In the matter of architectural details, when terraces and blustrades are brought in, as in late Mughal or Pahari painting, providing settings for royalty to sit on, or poets to hold their gatherings, there is a rather cursory delineation of the marble balustrade. In the rendering of water cisterns or steps leading up to the terrace, a kind of pseudo-perspective is brought in, the further ends of these features being shown narrower. Even though it seldom functions, the painter somehow demonstrates a desire to work out a feature—that he has picked up but does not fully comprehend—from some other works, possibly outside of Kashmir.

Some other things stand out too. Women are routinely shown heavily bejewelled, the emphasis being on pearl-studded ornaments or pearl strings and necklaces. The treatment is not too fine, but rows of white dots placed close together convey the artist's intention of showing his heroines of classic works or

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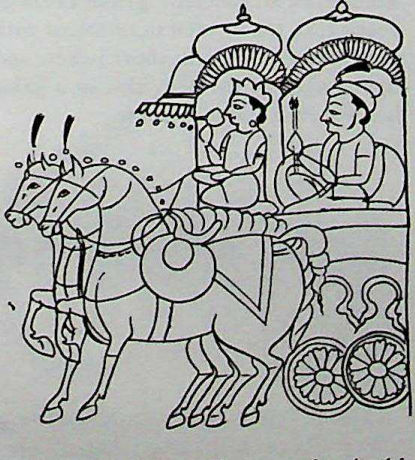

Fig.33 Typical rendering of a double-domed chariot.

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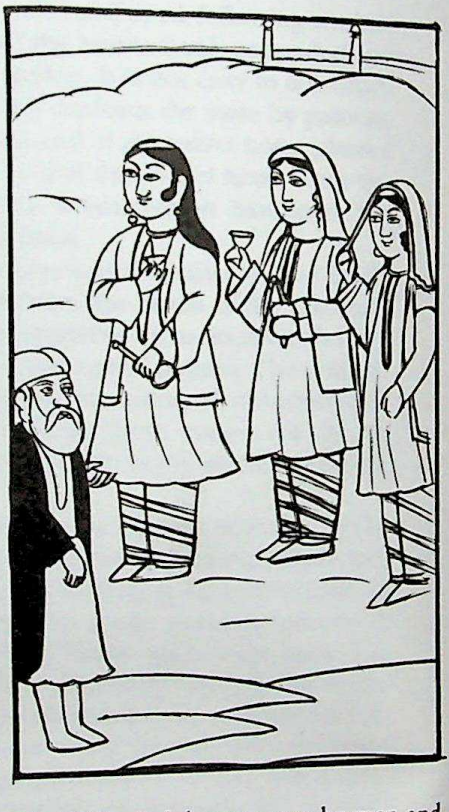

Fig.35 Typical dresses worn by men and women in a Muslim setting from a Persian poetic text: the women in *pairahans* with deep slits at the neck, short jackets and tight *paijamas*, the peot clad in a *qaba*, heavy turban and long boots.

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Fig.34 Woman seen wearing a flat Churah-type cap.

Fig.36 Typical rendering of the myriad heads of Vishnu in his Vishwarupa.

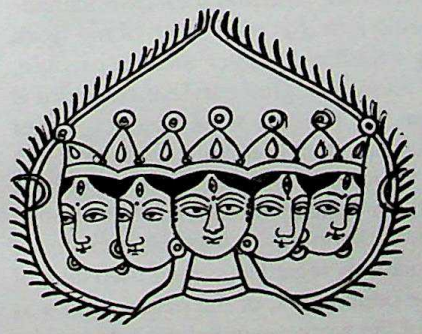

Fig.37 Lateral rendering of the five heads of the Goddess, with the nimbus correspondingly shaped.

courtesans as sumptuously attired and ornamented. A distinctive piece of jewellery that one often sees in Kashmiri paintings, a heavy string around the ears, partly interwoven with strands of hair and showing through only partially, is brought in evidently from observation, for the fashion was greatly popular in Kashmir. This piece is often set off by the prominent lock of hair that curls heavily along the temple in women's figures. Curiously, this very heavy, curling lock had appeared a long time back in Kashmir in the treatment of one of the devotee figures in the painted book-covers from Gilgit.[26] The heads of women are seldom shown uncovered, a veil being generally draped over them, even if not completely concealing the hair as it falls over the back and shoulders. A small nearly flat piece of cloth, shaped like a skull cap sitting close to the head is sported by the many women: this was clearly a commonly worn object in Kashmir and its colour varied; as an item of apparel, it is akin to the flat cap worn by women to this day in Churah, the Chamba area adjoining the Kashmir territories. The long flowing gown-shaped dress that women wear, the *pairahan* or *pheran* of today, is routinely seen, especially in paintings illustrating Persian classics. The opening slit at the neck, neatly embroidered at the edges, is sometimes uncommonly long, stretching down almost to the navel. But under this no garment is indicated as being worn, nor does the painter bring in a glimpse of the breasts through this opening. Men, as noticed before, generally wear, in illustrations of Persian classics, dresses that are meant to be evocative of Persian fashions: long *qabas;* over them short coats coming down to the hips; full and decorated turbans. The legs and feet of such men are frequently covered with high riding boots, especially when shown outdoors. When this is not so, tight breeches-like pyjamas are seen. Interestingly, the painter even shows Arjuna, who frequently appears in painting, in a slight variation of this dress: short jacket, doublet tucked into the breeches, high riding boots, head covered with a helmet as appropriate to the setting of the battle field on which he is so often seen.

The treatment of the 'countless' heads of Vishnu-Krishna in the Vishvarupa vision, in illustrated texts of the *Bhagvadagita,* may be one of the most distinctive inconographical features seen in Kashmir painting. All these heads, of deities, sub-divine beings, animals and birds, are grouped together in a circle, lightly drawn and placed against a white ground, somewhat like a nimbus, an aureole spreading out behind and around the head of Vishnu. The mouth is often slightly open: perhaps the impression sought to be conveyed is of these enormous forms issuing fourth from it. The principal head is in profile, blue-complexioned and monumentally impassive. The many heads that add upto and support the cosmic vision impression, take on in some ways the aspect of bright sun-like effulgence around the principal head. There must be remarkably few exceptions to this iconographic rendering: a notable one that one can think of is the image of Vishvarupa that Sodhi Bhan Singh is seen worshipping (See M. 21). In that painting, a frontal view is rendered by the painter, colossal and higly innovative.

In broad terms, the treatment, the approach and the iconography that one sees employed by the painter in these two principal groups of works continue into the small *gutka*-type of manuscripts of ritual and devotional content that constitute the third group. The space available to the artist in these is small, and he adjusts himself accordingly, but the vision is much the same. In the earlier works, those that are more commonly seen in Sharada manuscripts, the approach is more austere perhaps, the emphasis remaining on the icon, and very little attention being paid to the setting, the background, the ornamentation etc. One thinks here of renderings of the Goddess with multiple heads and arms, of Shiva and Parvati astride the Nandi Bull, of the goddess Sharada seen perched on her *hamsa-vahana.* In these there is a directness and an abbreviation of approach that frequently strikes one as bearing an 'early look'. Many of these may well be the work of non-professional artists, perhaps the same priests who scripted the sacred texts. But in these visual renderings a clear memory of earlier work is

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preserved; at any rate, early iconography appears to have lingered in the mind of the painter. In many of the later works of this group that have survived, those with a larger number of illustrations, with paintings serving as frontispieces to numerous texts within the same anthology, the approach and the iconography remain virtually unchanged; only the emphasis shifts a little. In these there is more ornamentation as well as more attention to costumes and appurtenant details. But there is also an impressive integration of the image with the elaborate illumination, the latter clearly being an import from Persian-style manuscripts. The same arabesques and geometrical patterns, the same loops, meanders and scrolls in blue, gold and purple, are brought in. These illuminated patterns do not interfere with the main image; they serve in fact as elaborate frames on all sides except the one facing the opposite page. The coming together of elements from different sources is unmistakable here, and has been achieved fairly smoothly. One sometimes gets the impression that the painter takes the usual *sarlauh* pattern and places it horizontally on the *pothi*-format page, breaking it up so as to spread it on three sides of an image. the process constituted a painless and imaginative transcreation, a synthesis.

Some very sumptuous, finely crafted work is encountered in these Sanskrit manuscripts in Sharada and Devanagari. Relatively small surfaces were used. A strong, immediate connection of the painting with the text in these underscores the painter's intention as well as the patron's need to clearly establish that the text and the image support each other: they seem to work together helping towards fixing the devotee's *dhyana,* his meditative concentration, upon the specified deity invoked in the text. It is interesting that in this kind of horizontal format manuscripts Pahari influences are more clearly traceable in the second half of the nineteenth century than they are in the vertical, codex-format manuscripts, whether of Persian inspiration or drawn from Hindu texts. This situation may well have obtained more easily in the Jammu territories where the Dogra family was in control from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and where Pahari painters are known to have been active.[27] Images of Seshashyi Vishnu, of Shiva and Parvati and others, of the kind that were so familiar to Pahari painters, make their appearance in decidedly large numbers in Kashmiri work at this time on account evidently of these contacts of Jammu, leading to stylistic interpenetration.

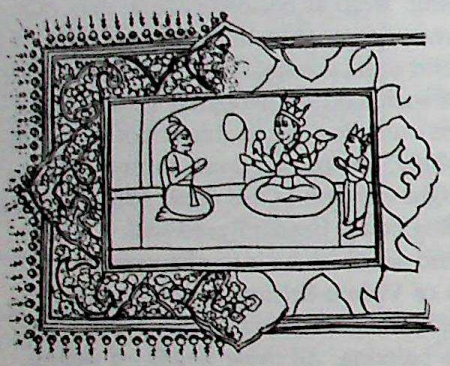

Fig.38 Combination of *Sarlauh*-shaped arabesque illumination and image, in an illustration of a Sanskrit text.

The whole matter of painters trained and working in the Kashmiri tradition, generally responsible for the works covered by the first two categories outlined above, absorbing local influences easily and integrating them with their work, raises a set of complex issues. There can be little doubt that the skills the Kashmiri craftsmen commanded were very impressive. The ability to change, innovate and internalise, was also a strong trait of their character. When a group of Kashmiri scribes and painters was thus shown, for the purposes of copying, a manuscript written and painted in a style that was not native to them, they were perhaps expected to make enough adjustments in their own style and their own manner of doing things to turn out a 'copy' that would reflect at least some of the work placed before them as a model. Obviously a Kashmiri painter was not capable, instantly, of producing a Murshidabad or Mewari or Guler style manuscript if asked to do this. But it is conceivable that the painters would induct, rather swiftly, elements into their work that established a thin link, built some kind of a bridge, between their own work and that which was placed before them by a patron. The situation, the context, in which the painters often worked was such that they might have shown little hesitation in doing this. It was less a matter of their having no conviction in the kind of work they regarded as their own than of their keeping a clear eye on the desires, the preferences, of the patron who was to pay them at the end of the completion of the work commissioned. It may be difficult to assert that the skills of the Kashmiri craftsman were prodigious, or that the painters were so malleable that they could turn their hands to anything at all; but eclecticism came easily to them, and the ability to pick and isolate elements

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from other styles for integrating into their own vision was distinctly theirs.

It is this, perhaps, which helps explain, to an extent the phenomenon that Hermann Goetz called the Afghan-Kashmiri style of painting in illustrated manuscripts.[28] The materials available for study are not plentiful, but it would seem that at least some groups of Kashmiri painters decided to deviate from the mainstream to accommodate the tastes of patrons who belonged to the north-west frontier of India or to Afghanistan. The connection betwen Kashmir and Afghanistan is very old, with historical links stretching far into the past and continuing at the level of trade for long centuries. The establishment of Afghan supremacy over Kashmir in the eighteenth century following the invasion of Nadir Shah and the subsequent Durrani episode, led to renewed close connections. The Durrani rule in Kashmir is remembered for its harshness but, whatever the situation at the political level for old or new patrons, work by Kashmiri painters, whether resident in Kashmir or travelling to the northwest of Punjab and Afganistan, must have gone on throughout this period. An unusal survival is an illustrated Pushto manuscript in the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta,[29] and even though it is of a late date, it is a possible pointer to an earlier tradition in which Kashmiri works were produced for Afghan clients or patrons. Virtually nothing is documented but a situation like this can easily be visualised.

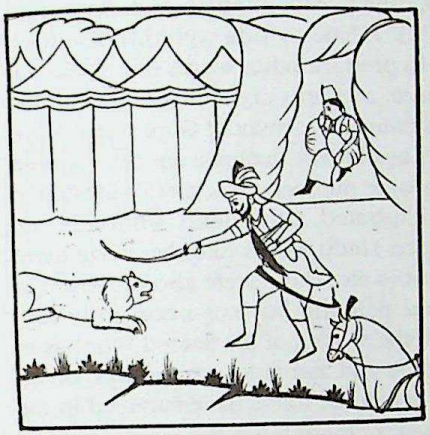

Fig.39 A work in the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' idiom: a hero slays a lion.

In some Afghan-Kashmiri style manuscripts, a recognisable connection with the mainstream of Kashmiri painting can be discerned. But a number of manuscripts which are placed within this style somehow seem to move away from the Kashmiri mainstream towards developing a distinct identity. Both situations seem to have obtained. Thus while the Baroda manuscript published by Goetz[30] has a fairly clear Kashmiri look, the one 'Afghan-Kashmiri' manuscript to which attention is drawn here (No. M. 26) is only with some difficulty placed in the Kashmiri context. This manuscript seems in fact to point to the limits to which a definition of the Kashmir style can be stretched. It is just possible that owing to emigration, a group of Kashmiri artists may slowly have veered away from the main style and founded a virtually new and different expression. Another possibility which can be envisaged is that some groups of scribes and painters, unrelated to Kashmir, may have been active in northern India, and that it is their work, made in the awareness of popular Kashmiri work, that constitutes the greater part of the manuscripts in this group. Once again, however, one reminds oneself that the documentation is very scanty. In the 'Afghan Kashmiri' category of works, the most noticeable departure from Kashmiri work is the types, especially of men, that one encounters. The men are generally shown slim and tall, with a close-cut beard. In their dress, they are distinguished from the Kashmiri types by very full Afghani turbans, tied – as they still are – so that the front is high, there is a dip in the middle, and the rear part lifts but does not attain the height of the front part. Also, the faces of men and women are tinted a light pink on the cheeks, a fashion which may well owe itself to the convention that also entered the stream of late Mughal painting in the eighteenth century. The colours also change somewhat, but more in the distribution than in their range. Slowly, landscape too undergoes a change, with tufts of grass marking the backgrounds. The spirit of the paintings however stays quite close to that of Kashmiri work in general. In this 'sub-style' all that one sees is manuscripts of Persian classics. No Hindu themes are encountered, and there are no manuscripts of Persian translations of classic Sanskrit works, embellished with paintings.

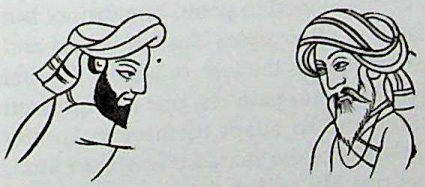

Fig.40 Male types seen in 'Afghan-Kashmiri' work, sporting heavy turbans with a dip in the middle.

To turn now to the fifth and final group of Kashmiri work. It is possible that it was to the illuminator rather than to the painter from Kashmir that patrons in the Punjab plains, many of them Sikhs, were first drawn. Illumination in manuscripts by itself must have been, by the seventeenth century, an art all but lost in these parts.[31] Thus, when Kashmiri scribes, painters and illuminators came around, offering their services, they must have been eagerly welcomed. The sacred book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is a text which in strict belief, admits of no

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figural representation or illustration. Not that it was difficult to find illustration to passages, but the idea of figural work in the sacred text was never entertained: there is reflection in this of the same desire to have sumptuous copies of the sacred texts made, as the Muslims had for possessing illuminated copies of the Quran. Illuminated fine copies of the *Guru Granth Sahib* were widely comissioned, alike by Sikhs and Hindus, countless Hindus also holding the text in deep veneration. Some superb copies, finely calligraphed and delicately illuminated, were produced (see M. 21, P. 37). Side by side with this, Kashmiri scribes and painters were commissioned to produce other works like copies of the *Janam Sakhis,* (see P. 38), hagiographical accounts of the first of the Gurus, Nanak Dev. There was no interdict on illustrating an account of Guru Nanak's life and career. This, combined with the challenge of many dramatic episodes woven into the narrative, led to the production in large numbers of copies of illustrated *Janam-sakhis,* many of them profusely illustrated. Other texts written in the Gurmukhi script, and illustrated, drew upon Hndu works like the *Bhagavata Purana,* the *Mahabharata,* and the *Ramayana* etc. These were also produced in large numbers, featuring illumination and painting but not necessarily fine calligraphy, which was emphasised only in the writing of the Sacred Word as in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Occasionally, a large and ambitious manuscript, on an extended scale, like the one of which four splendid folios have survived in the National Museum,[32] was also commissioned. In these folios the requirement of rendering subjects and themes that were not commonly treated must have forced the Kashmiri painter to fall back on his enormous resourcefulness, for the themes included visulisation of *ragas* and *raginis,* the rendering of all the ten Gurus with their family members, the twenty-four *avataras* of Vishnu, an unusal and impressive image of Vishvarupa etc. All of them seem to have been worked out by the Kashmiri painter almost for the first time when commissioned by a patron, Sodhi Bhan Singh, who also appears himself in three of the four painted folios. The iconography of the *Ragamala* panels rendered by Kashmiri painters raises the interesting question of what their sources were. Not everything in these corresponds with the known iconographies of many of the *ragas* and *raginis,* but there are some images that are instantly recognisable and fit perfectly into known sets or series, purely in iconographical terms. If the *Ragamala* was not a theme that the Kashmiri painters were frequently commisioned to paint, one cannot but conclude that their awareness of what existed in other styles like the Pahari and the Rajasthani, must have been truly extensive. If this is the first, or almost the first time, that this theme was being attempted by Kashmiri painters, one is impressed again by their ability to enter new pastures and to adapt themselves to any situations or demands. The style of these folios is of the standard Kashmiri kind, and one gets the feeling that the painters quickly added the iconography of *ragamalas* to their repertoire, translating the images into Kashmiri idiom. and casting them in very Kashmiri colours.

Fig.41 Guru Nanak, in a conventional rendering.

In the Punjab plains where different, if minor, local styles were prevalent,[33] the Kashmiri painters seem to have turned out other works that reflected a diversity of influences. In the nineteenth century, specially at the Lahore court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and at the level of the nobles close to the court, it was the Pahari style which was in evident favour, Kashmiri works being confined mostly to illustrated chronicles etc. But soon a mixture of styles comes into view, with the work of Kashmir, the Punjab plains, the Hills, somehow all coming together. Another trait that surfaces in the Punjab plains is that of getting large sized manuscripts painted and written. In these, the text occupies virtually the whole page, only a small area in the centre of selected folios being reserved for a painting. Numerous manuscripts with these features can be located. In the plains, very hastily written and painted works of the Kashmiri kind were also turned out, apparently for small fees. This kind of 'bazaar' work is frequently seen in Gurmukhi manuscripts even though there exist manuscripts in other languages

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and scripts with the same features. The work done in the Punjab plains by Kashmiri artists does not exhibit stylistic elements that set it apart from the mainstream. But, somehow, one associates a certain lack of fastidiousness on the part of the average Punjabi patron who commissioned works. Perhaps 'bazaar' manuscripts were more acceptable here than they were in Kashmir itself in Jaipur or in Benares.

Notes

1. It is of interest to remark upon the fact that nearly all the literature on Kashmiri painting so far published, however sparse, virtually equates Kashmiri work with the work forming this group. Adamova and Greck who have written the only monograph on this subject till now, do not take even a casual notice of other work from Kashmir, like that referred to in the groups B to E here.
2. This tentative but invalid distinction was made by me also in the early stages of my researches in this field. In informal presentations, and by implication, even in some early articles (like that in 1987), I pointed out to a possible distinction along these lines. For reasons outlined here, I now hold that such a distinction is not tenable.
3. The situation was evidently different at an earlier point of time when the Muslim learned men are known to have taken greater interest in works of Hindu origin and in early Indian languages. The commissioning of the continuation of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* in Sanskrit. by Sultan Zain-ul Abidin to Jonaraja and Srivara is, in itself, a matter of interest. The Sultan seems to have had truly eclectic tastes and preferences. Thus, Mohibb-ul Hasan, 91: "Zainu'l abidin was not only a patron of learned men, he was himself a scholar and a poet. He knew Sanskrit, Persian, and Tibetan besides Kashmiri which was his mother tongue. Pandits read out to him from various Sastras, while Srivara recited to him the Vasistha Brahmadarsana of Valmiki and the Samhita along with their explanations of annotations."
4. This chapter of Indian history and art is too well known for it to be documented here in any detail. The fact of the Mughal emperor Akbar being interested in Hindu texts has been known for a long time; with passing years, however, the list of princes and grandees of the realm who took interest in Indian works of old has been steadily expanding with the increase in one's awareness of the range of Mughal paintings.
5. It is useful to recall here Mohibb-ul Hasan's statement based on early histories like the *Baharistan-i Shahi* and the *Tarikh-i Kashmir* of Hasan, that Zain-ul abidin is known to have regularly sent his agents "to India, Persia, Iraq, and Turkistan" to purchase Persian and Arabic manuscripts for bringing them back to Kashmir. "In case their owners refused to sell them, his instructions were to secure their transcribed copies and pay the copyist generously." A large library was evidently built up "which existed until the time of Fateh Shah". Mohibb-ul Hasan, 90-91. With time, the spread of learning in Kashmir seems to have been considerable and one rightfully assumes that Persian learning was at a premium both among the Muslim and Hindu nobility and the official class in Kashmir.
6. The mention of "iconography', in the context of Islamic works, does sound dissonant, but the sense in which the term is used here is evidently very specific.
7. Cf. Adamova and Greck, 17-18, "The artist did not consider it his task to individualize the subject in every given instance and to make one ruler different from another. On the contrary they are identically depicted in various miniatures of the same manuscripts and even in various manuscripts. It was important that the viewer/reader be easily able to recognise this or that type of personage. For this reason each of them was allotted a set of consistent and easily distinguishable features of which the basic one was clothing . . . "
8. Attention is drawn here, again, to Budaq Qazwini's account of commercial production of manuscripts in Shiraz : "There are in Shiraz many writers of *nastaliq* -, all copying one another, making it impossible to distinguish between their work .... Should any one be desirous of procuring a thousand illuminated books, they could be produced in Shiraz within a year. They all follow the same pattern, so that there is nothing to distinguish them by." Quoted in Akimushkin and Ivanov, 50.
9. The themes or episodes briefly referred to here are all taken from actual works that are discussed or reproduced *infra*, in the sections on manuscripts or paintings.

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10. Examples of this kind of figure in Kashmiri painting are far too many to be cited here in detail. See, *infra* in the sections on manuscripts and paintings.
11. See, for example, Pal, 1982, nos. 2.62, S.68, S.75, D.17, D.18.
12. For some examples of this treatment of the arms, see, Pal 1982, Nos. S.1, S.2, S.3, S.36, S.65.
13. Attention to specific manuscripts or works is deliberately not being drawn here, and what follows simply is a summing up of some prominent stylistic elements in Kashmiri painting. The points made naturally lean upon the works that are reproduced in the sections on manuscripts and paintings. Where works are discussed, these features are pointed out.
14. The luxuriant, ubiquitous presence of lotuses in Kashmir is too obvious to miss, and it is this familiarity and fondness with the flower that is so well reflected in the art of the valley. This is not to say that lotuses do not figure in the art of the rest of India; what is suggested here is that Kashmiri painting is almost unthinkable without the colour of the lotus that so naturally belongs to it.
15. The situation here is materially different from that in early Pahari paintings where it is common to come upon flat monochromatic backgrounds that fill the entire space without the artist showing any inclination for bringing in even a minor strip of the sky at the top. Paintings with such backgrounds would be extremely rare in Kashmir.
16. The Mughal artist approached the female body differently from the Persian artist, even if he did not emphasize its contours and its fullness like the Rajasthani and the Pahari painters did. This point is made at some length in Goswamy and Fischer, 1987, 9-23.
17. The different approaches to portraiture in Indian art are discussed in some length in B.N. Goswamy, 1986, p. 193.
18. See, *infra,* M. 21.
19. See, *infra,* P. 52.
20. Issues of patronage are discussed, more fully, *infra,* in Chapter IV. The situation is of great interest, being materially different from that obtaining in other major schools of Indian painting like the Mughal, the Rajasthani, the Pahari or the Deccani.
21. Conferring small pieces of land upon artists was one of the ways of binding them and their families in an enduring relationship with the patron. Several land grants in favour of painters have been discovered and published. See, for example, B.N. Goswamy, 1975.
22. See, thus Pal, 1982, No.S-5. Similar renderings can be seen in several other panels at Alchi.
23. It needs to be stated that while this treatment of arms is typical of Kashmir work, it is not exclusive to it and, occasionally, but very occasionaly, one comes upon this elsewhere too. A good example is the large Jain cloth panel reproduced in Saryu Doshi, 1985, 20;80. What the source of this feature is would be difficult to determine. The same difficulty, however, one does not encounter when one sees this treatment of the arms in a sub-Imperial style of Mughal painting of the Akbar period, for the painter of that folio, interestingly, is Fazl Kashmiri. For a reproduction, see Beach,1981; fig.20;131,135.
24. See, *supra,* note 12.
25. Stylisation of this kind is not unusual. One thinks, thus, of countless Chola bronzes in which the *ayudhas* rest lightly on the two raised fingers of deities, instead of being grasped firmly in the hands.
26. See, Banerjee, 1968, for a reproduction of the book covers with this treatment of hair.
27. One knows of several Pahari artists who moved from Kangra and Guler, after the decline of those states in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, to Jammu where apparently patronage to painters was still available. Among these painters were Kanchanu, Ruldu, Arjun and Haricharan. See, Goswamy, 1968. 17-68; also see, Archer, 1973, I, 183, 260. A leaf from a painter's sketch book with portraits of Arjun, Ruldu and Kanchanu is in the Chandigarh Museum. It is datable to c. 1860. Kanchanu is described there as "a servant of the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur of Jammu". For a reproduction see Goswamy and Fischer, 1992, fig. 120.
28. Goetz, 1967A, 912. The designation that Goetz uses is "Mughal-Afghanistani" for this style of paintings but, considering that he places them in Kashmir, the term "Afghan-Kashmiri" seems to be far more appropriate.
29. See, *infra,* M. 26. .n the section on manuscripts.
30. 1969A.

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31. Thus, Losty, 1982, 120-21 "The elegance of the *Nagari* script found in fine quality manuscripts is unique in India; only Jaipur manuscripts can compare with it, but here the scribes were often Kashmiri anyway. They revived the ancient practise of writing with gold and silver ink on blue or black paper... a characteristic of Nepalese manuscripts but not seen in Indian manuscripts before." Losty also remarks upon the sumptuousness of illumination in Kashmiri manuscripts.
32. See *infra* in the sections M. 21, P. 38, P. 52 manuscripts and paintings.
33. Not much is known of painting in the Punjab plains before the eighteenth century. A somewhat rare group of paintings with the name of the artist and the owner, together with an early eighteenth century date, are with the art-dealer Subhash Kapur in New York. The style seems to be an off-shoot of the late Mughal style, with an input of some local elements.

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Chapter Four

THE NURTURING:

Production and Patronage

Painting in Kashmir was intimately connected with a number of other arts and crafts that one reads of as having been imported into the land by Zain-ul Abidin from Samarqand and, undoubtedly, from other parts of the Islamic world with which active intercourse is known to have existed in the period that followed. Sculpture, a major art that had flourished in Kashmir virtually came to an end with the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate, for it was in evident conflict with Islamic ideas. Any figurative, three-dimensional work stood in danger of being linked with notions of idolatry. In the crafts of the 'Islamic world' that one mentions in the context of painting, too, very little figurative work was ordinarily seen. The connection between painting and the other arts and crafts is therefore primarily in respect of the vocabulary of design that belonged to manufactures such as shawls, papier-mache work, carpet-weaving, and wood work.[1] The intimate connection between illumination in the form of floral work and arabesques, and painting in manuscripts on paper, is what leads one to speak of the overall context of design, a certain part of it being developed on the Kashmiri soil by local craftsmen. The original inspiration for this may have come initially from outside, especially from Persia, and motifs and designs may have continued to come in throughout the period of painting, but there were marked local inputs and one can speak with confidence of a Kashmiri identity in design.

The craft that is best associated in most minds with Kashmir is that of shawl making. A measure of pride and enthusiasm enters the statements of Kashmiri writers when they speak of the great attainments of Kashmiri craftsmen in this manufacture. 'Kashmir', says Pt. Anand Koul, 'is not only one of the finest countries that the sun shines upon, but a store house of exquisite works of art fostered by people renowned for elegant taste and artistic faculty like the Japanese in the Far East. They from primitive simplicity, began to aim at elegance, influenced, no doubt, by the natural beauties with which they were surrounded and by a climate eminently suited to their application to industrial pursuits, together with the wealth of raw materials with which nature has profusely endowed this country."[2] To the average Kashmiri his land is noted for three things: 'Shawl, *Shali* (rice) and *Shalgam,* (vegetable produce)'. There are references to fine woollen *avikams* that came from the 'hilly country' forming a part of the great gifts made by Dhritarashtra to Krishna when he came to the court as an emissary of the Pandavas.[3] Kashmiri scholars often relate this to their own land and treat *avikams* as shawls produced there. Their sumptuousness apart there is no means of knowing how the *avikams* of old were produced. But the shawl that made Kashmir famous throughout the world was the kind that was patterned with floral designs taken originally from the Persian world.

The great popularity of shawls and the esteem in which they were held for their softness, warmth, colours and the beauty of their designs is borne out in the sixteenth century by Abu'l Fazl who speaks of them with much enthusiasm. The garments stored in the Imperial wardrobe, according to him, were very carefully ordered in respect of quality, value and colours. Of the order of colours in the Imperial wardrobe, he gives the following: '*tus, safid alcha,* ruby-coloured, golden, orange, brass-coloured, crimson, grass-green, cotton flower-coloured, sandalwood-coloured, almond-coloured, purple, grape-coloured, mauve like the colour of some parrot, honey-coloured, brownish-lilac, coloured like the *ratan-manjini* flower, coloured like the *kasni* flower, apple-coloured, hay-coloured, pistachio . . . *bhoja-patra*-coloured, pink, light blue, coloured like the *galghan* flower, water coloured, oil coloured, brown-red, emerald, bluish like chinaware,

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violet, bright pink, mango-coloured, musk-coloured, coloured like the *fakhta*".[4]

The amazing range of colours that Abu'l Fazl mentions in relationship to shawls, and his statement that, "His Majesty encourages in every possible way the manufacture of shawls in Kashmir',[5] gives one some idea of the extent and the liveliness of the industry as it must have flourished in Kashmir. From the seventeenth century, there are countless references in the writings of foreign travellers and merchants to the shawls of Kashmir, the sources from which the raw-materials were drawn, the organisation of the industry and the trade, the ability of the Kashmiri craftsmen to adapt themselves to designs according to the needs and the tastes of different regions, and the like. Thomas Roe, Bernier, Manucci, Vigne, Manrique, among others, speak of shawls with some passion,[6] the first mentioned however speaking with some indignation of the occasion when the governor of Surat pressed upon him a 'Gold *Shalh*' as a bribe in 1616 A.D..[7] Above all, however, it is the detailed information recorded by Moorcroft in 1841 A.D. that gives one an adequate idea of what Kashmir had to offer in respect of shawls.[8] "I find [in Srinagar] merchants from Gela and from other cities of Chinese Turkestan, from Uzbek, Tartary, from Kabul, from Persia, from Turkey and from the provinces of British India engaged in purchasing and in waiting for the getting up of shawl goods differing as to quality and pattern in conformity to the taste of the markets for which they are intended in a degree probably not suspect in Europe".[9]

What Abu'l Fazl records in respect of the colours of shawls, Moorcroft does in respect of the patterns on these, and of the range of uses to which objects made by the shawl weavers were put. The single most popular motif or design that is associated with Kashmir is what came later to be called the *'paisley'* pattern, after the place in Scotland where the manufacture of imitation Kashmiri shawls was begun in the nineteenth century. This motif had originated possibly in Persia, at least in its rudimentary form, but was refined and expanded in Kashmir where it went generally by the simple name of *buta* (plant). Called variously the cone, or the pine shape in the west, *kalgha, jigha* or *kairi* in different parts of India, it possibly was a variation and a refinement of the elegant cypress-tree with a slightly curving tip at the top.[10] But, under whatever name, it had become a prominent part of the vocabulary of design in Kashmir by the sixteenth century.

Nearly everyone acquainted with the arts and crafts of Kashmir, especially its shawls would recognise a certain number of terms : thus *'hashia'*, a word used also in book-illumination, stands for the border, the *palla*, as Moorcraft says,[11] means 'the whole of the embroidery at the two ends, or as they are technically called the heads of the shawl'; the *zanjeer* is the chain that 'runs above and also below the principal mass of the *palla* and as it were confines it': the *kunj* is the single *buta* in the cluster of flowers in the corner; the *mattan* is the decorated part of the field or ground. Moorcroft provides a great deal of further information on the kinds of shawls, and their ornament. The *buta*, he says for instance, is the "generic term for flower, but is specifically applied, when used alone, to the large cone-like ornament which forms the most prominent feature of the *palla*. Some times there is only one line of these ornaments extending from the lower *zanjeer* to the upper one. When there is a double row, one above the other, the *bush* is called *dokad, sehkad,* upto five, after which it takes the name of tukaddar".[12] Continuing, Moorcroft says: "Each bush consists of three parts: the *pai* or foot or pediment of leaves generally; the *shikam*, or belly, and the *sis* or head. The head is either erect, or straight, or curved, or inclined. If the *bush* slopes generally, it is named *butakaj*, the *thal* or net is the work which separates the different *butas*, but sometimes the interstice is without ornament".

There are shawls that were "*hashiyadar*, or with borders; *dhourdar*, with an ornament running all round the shawl between the border and the field; *mattandar*, with flowers or decoration in the middle of the field; *chanddar*, with a circular ornament or moon in the centre of the field; *kunjbutadar*, with a group

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of flowers at each corner; *alifdar,* with green sprigs without any other colour on a white ground or field; *kaddar,* with large groups of flowers somewhat in the form of the cone of a pine, with the ends or points straight or curved downward",[13] and so on. Shawls with other patterns like *jaldar, do-gul, tak-i-angoor, dwazdakhat, dwazdarang, gul-i-parwana, chaharbagh, lehridar* (waved like water), *maramat* (snakey), *islimi, chap-o-rast* (left and right), are also spoken of.[14] There seems to be no end to motifs or designs, as any one familiar with Kashmir shawls would easily know. Then there is a list of the kind of objects on which these patterns were used : lengths or squares or other pieces being woven or embroidered for turbans, trousers, girdles, caps, short stockings, long stockings, canopies, curtains for doors and windows, saddle-cloths, elephants caparisons, dish covers, hangings in front of recesses, and the like. The list is unending, and one can gain some idea from it of the pervasive presence of designs essentially associated today with shawls in life as it was lived in Kashmir.

Legends connected with shawls are a part of the folklore of Kashmir: one hears of Naghz Beg, a cook of Mirza Haider of Kashghar, who was involved in developing a certain pattern in the middle of the sixteenth century in woven shawls; of Saidababa who invented the embroidered or *amlikar* shawl in 1785 A.D.; of Khwaja Yusuf, an Armenian living in Kashmir in 1803 who designed the *dokunj* shawls; of Mustafa Pandit and Aziz Pandit who ingeniously invented the *do-rukha* or double-sided and the *zaminpast gulbala* shawls with raised floral work in the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1864.[15] The terminology that the illuminator of manuscripts in Kashmir may have used could be different, but there is little doubt that the motifs, the designs that we see forming part of his work, interwoven with arabesques, owed itself to his awareness of the work of the *naqqashes* who were associated with shawl designing.

Much information is available on the manner in which the shawl industry was organised, different workers being assigned different tasks, but all accounts agree that the most important person in the work was the pattern-drawer, the *naqqash.* As Irwin says, he was the one who received the highest pay, far higher even than that of the weaver."[16] Pattern drawers were few in number, and in the second half of the century, when the industry was very much expanded, the art was still said to be confined to five or six families. Drawings from a book of trades and professions carried on in Kashmir, showing the *naqqash* at work, have survived from the nineteenth century.[17] Undoubtedly the work of the *naqqash* involved in pattern drawing for shawls was not very different from that of the designer of illumination in manuscripts even if the medium was different.

Nearly as interesting as shawl-making, from the point of view of designs, was the other great industry for which Kashmir was widely known, the art of papier-mache, *kar-i qalamdani* ('pen-case making') from the fact that it was pen-cases to which the technique of papier-mache was originally applied.[18] Made from several layers of paper pasted on the mould of the required article, the method involved pulp made of Kashmiri scrap paper, which was pounded and mixed with rice-paste, smoothened, covered with a thin layer of plaster, rubbed with burnt bricks, layered again with a stain, and *readied* in its ground or *zamin* when dry for receiving of floral work. The technique was intricate and time-consuming, but the product could turn out to be extremely delicate in appearance, the floral work in different colours, gold, cochineal, ultramarine, verdigris, white lead, silver etc. being done, and then the whole covered with a thin layer of varnish. It was not only *qalamdans* or pen cases that were made in papier-mache but other objects of great variety:[19] snuff cases, shields, bows and arrows, combs, trays, boxes of all kinds, even screens, tables, bedstead legs, candle stands and the like. With the Lamas of Ladakh and Tibet were in great demand bookrests in *qalamdani* work. Pt. Anand Koul records that under the influence of French shawl-agents, boxes of different-kinds in this technique were prepared. "Shawls were sent to France in papier mache boxes which were separately sold then at

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high prices".[20] Lacquered work of the kind used for pen-cases, whole palanquins, howdahs, ceilings and even walls carried the kind of ornamentation that was originally meant for small objects like pen cases. In the making of these objects, and in the intricate floral work that ornamented them, was employed the same vocabulary of design that one speaks of in connection with shawl making, appropriately modified of course. Some figurative work both on shawls and on papier-mache objects was occasionally done. With figuration one is back once again in the world of the *naqqashes.*[21] Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that the papier-mache trade was mostly in the hands of Shia Muslims with whom designing and figurative work is far more easily associated than with orthodox Sunni craftsmen.[22]

A fascinating aspect of the trade that followed the development and growth of industries like these is the establishment of connections with far flung areas for the export of these objects as also for purposes of obtaining the raw materials for the industries. Moorcroft, for instance, records enormous quantities of shawl wool annually imported into Kashmir. "The wool was formerly supplied almost exclusively by the western provinces of Lhasa and Ladakh: but of late, considerable quantities have been procured from the neighbourhood of Yarkand, from Khotan, and the families of the Great Kirghiz horde. It is brought chiefly by Mogol merchants who exchange it for manufactured shawl goods in Kashmir, which they dispose of advantageously in Russia".[23] Again, in respect of *qalamdani* work, Moorcroft says: "The ground of the colouring is commonly metallic, of gold or of tin, and the pigments employed are cochineal or the kirmis insect, ultra-marine from Yarkand, white-lead from Russia, as well as verdigris from Surat, and possibly from Britain. Other colouring drugs are found in the country or are imported from Hindustan".[24] The implications of trading contacts such as these are important for understanding what was happening in the area of painting and illumination. Illustrated manuscripts which form the subject of this study are easy to visualise as portable objects that were often items of import or export . What went out, or came back, with traders who brought in materials and carried back finished goods from Kashmir, must have been considerably more than raw wool or minerals for pigments.

Yet another craft intimately conected with design as it obtained in Kashmir was that of carpet-weaving. To this day, Kashmir is known for it. Once again, the craft is said to have been introduced in the land through Sultan Zain-ul abidin's exertions. Interestingly, it is said to have suddenly gone into a decline some time after the Sultan died, but was revived in the time of Jahangir through the efforts of a Kashmiri named Akhun Rahnuma, who brought it back to Kashmir from Andijan in Persia which he visited in the course of a Haj pilgrimage via Central Asia.[25] Akhun Rahnuma, according to the tradition preserved in Kashmir, learnt the art himself, brought back all tools necessary for it, trained some people upon his return and, for all practical purposes, resuscitated singlehandedly an art that had all but died. The industry flourished, and a great deal of trade in it is said to have started; some very distinguished work, rivalling the work of Persia, was produced. The technique of carpet weaving is well recorded, one of the important ingredients in it being the work of the designer, or the *naqqash*. The method followed in converting the original design prepared by him into a textile was very close to that used in shawl making. The '*talim*' system, as applied to carpet weaving, is said to have started only as late as 1875 A.D. under Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the credit for this being given to a weaver called Khwaja Amir Ju Gangu.[26]

One reads of magnificent floral carpets, with designs of animals, fish, even whole gardens, being woven into carpets. There is the amusing story of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who had longed to "wander through the gardens of Kashmir fragrant with almond blossoms and sit on the fresh green turf". But, unable to take the trip to Kashmir on account of a sudden famine that overtook Kashmir, he was

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presented with an enormous carpet prepared at the behest of his governor of Kashmir, Col. Mehan Singh. The carpet featured the same view which the Maharaja had longed for and when it was presented to Ranjit Singh at Lahore, he is said to have been so delighted by it and its great beauty of design that he rolled on it as if on the turf of Kashmir. The names of the weavers of this extraordinary carpet, Fazl Jan, Jabbar Khan and Kamal Ju are still preserved in Kashmiri memory.[27]

The designs on carpets, intricate and subtle, some of them patterned after Herati, Kirmani, Yarkand and Kashan work, were regularly produced in Kashmir and Pt. Anand Koul speaks of a Kashmiri carpet produced as late as 1902 A.D. with its design comprising of a large central medallion in pale yellow, surrounded by cartouches of various colours disposed on a dark blue ground diapered with floral tracery, in imitation of an Ardabil carpet. "Each of the corners is filled with a section of a large medallion surrounded by cartouches. The border is composed of long and circular panels alternating with lobed outlines on a brown ground covered with floral embellishments, while at the summit of the carpet is a panel bearing ....(a) devout inscription ... saying that it was the work of "the slave of the portal, Maqsud of Kashan, in the year of Hijra 946'."[28] The description reads remarkably like that of a design of a double illuminated page from an illustrated manuscript.

Another skill, related to these crafts, and directly connected with manuscripts is that of the time-honoured art of calligraphy in the Islamic world. Unfortunately, its presence in Kashmir, however, is remarkably poorly documented. There is little reason to doubt that like in most parts of the Islamic world, calligraphy here too was held in the highest esteem, higher perhaps than painting and almost every other art. As Abu'l Fazl spoke of it: "The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate; it contains the secret word, and is the tongue of the hand.... Superficial observers see in the letter a sooty figure; but the deepsighted a lamp of wisdom. The written letter looks black, notwithstanding the thousand rays within it; ... A letter is the portrait painter of wisdom; a rough sketch from the realm of ideas; a dark night ushering in day; a black cloud pregnant with knowledge; the wand for the treasures of insight; speaking, though dumb; stationary, and yet travelling; stretched on the sheet, and yet soaring upwards".[29] The context in which Abu'l Fazl wrote this impassioned passage in praise of calligraphy is not specifically that of the Mughal court alone but that of the Islamic world as a whole. He records that the emperor Akbar "shows much regard to the art, and takes a great interest in the different systems of writing; hence the large number of skillful calligraphists (at the court)".[30]

There can be little doubt that calligraphy, as distinct from copying or scripting, must have been practised widely in Kashmir because of the great interest in learning introduced at the court by Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. Unfortunately, however, very little information on calligraphers from Kashmir seems to have survived. Once again one refers to Abu'l Fazl and his *Ain-i Akbari* in which he records the great distinction attained by a Kashmiri calligrapher. He says: "Nastaliq has specially received a new impetus (under the Emperor Akbar). The artist who, in the shadow of the throne of His Majesty, has become a master of calligraphy, is Muhammad Husayn of Kashmir. He has been honoured with the title of *zarrin qalam'*. [the gold-pen]. He surpassed his master Mawlana Abdal Aziz; his *maddat* and *dawair* show everywhere a proper proportion to each other; and art critics consider him equal to Mulla Mir Ali".[31] Gilded and illuminated examples of his work are known to have survived, among them a manuscript in the Lytton library at Aligarh.[32]

Abu'l Fazl goes on to speak of other renowned calligraphists of his age, among whom he lists "Ali Chaman of Kashmir", who is mentioned in the same breath as some great masters of *nastaliq* from Mashhad, Qazwin and Arsalan. Another

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master of *nastaliq*, Muhammad Murad of Kashmir, with the title, 'Shirin kalam' is mentioned by Ehtaram-ud-din Ahmad Shaghil in his *Sahifa-i Khushnavisan*, as the "equal of Mulla Mir Ali and Khwaja Sultan Ali Mashhadi."[33] When Abu'l Fazl speaks of the library of the Emperor Akbar in wich books are kept in a clear order, he mentions that "prose books, poetical works, Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmirian, Arabic, are all separately placed."

Despite the absence of documentation one gets hints of calligraphy in Arabic and Persian having become an art practised also by the Pandits of Kashmir. When Abdul Halim Sharar speaks of Lucknow in the nineteenth century, among the distinguished calligraphers of that town where many Kashmiri Pandits had settled, he lists, side by side with great calligraphers like Hafiz Nurullah and Munshi Shams-ud-din, one Munshi Sarbsukh who is believed to have been a Kashmiri pandit.[34] Sarbsukh was a pupil of Hafiz Nur-ullah and had mastered his style of writing to such an extent that he calligraphed several *waslis* in Nur-ullah's style and passed them off as being in the master's own hand without people being able to make the difference out. "Hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits" who had settled in Lucknow and had turned to calligraphy are referred to by Sharar.[35] Prominently mentioned among them is Mansa Ram who is said to have been a master of the art. Nearer home, the calligraphic skills of a person like Pandit Raja Ram Kaul alias 'Tota', writing in the Persian script, in Kashmir were obviously very impressive. There are references to his scripting whole manuscripts during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and later. A distinguished manuscript like that of the Ragamala in Persian characters, now in the National Museum, New Delhi,[36] (see, M. 47) bears testimony to this. It was completed at as late a date as A.D. 1873 according to an inscription within a roundel on the opening folio. Persian calligraphy in *nastaliq* apart, there is little doubt that distinguished work in Devanagari, Sharada and Gurmukhi scripts was also done. Coomaraswamy has drawn attention to 'nobly scripted' manuscripts of the sacred book of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib, being written by Kashmiri hands in the nineteenth century.[37] But, of this, more notice shall be taken later.

II

As in other crafts and industries, gradually the idea of family workshops for the production of books, including illustrated books must have caught on. One knows of extensive workshops where shawls and carpets and papier mache-work were produced on a collaborative basis, several artisans engaging together for producing works for sale or export, accepting commission and sub-contract work. Members of the same family were often involved in different capacities in working in these *karkhanas*, father, mother, children, all taking part according to their abilities and their capacity.[38] One reads consistently of even small children, boys and girls, engaged in minor work in the papier-mache work, assisting, rendering minor services at first and then growing up to take charge of the family's production themselves. In this very fashion, it would seem, groups of Kashmiris, drawn frequently from the same family, engaged themselves in different activities centering around the arts of the book and took to turning books out on a professional basis: scripting, illuminating, page-cutting, binding and, in many cases, painting illustrations to the text.

When one reads of hundreds of maunds of the holy *Quran* being exported from Kashmir to other parts, including Ladakh,[39] one cannot but think of the existence of professional groups of scribes, gilders and book-binders, engaged in this kind of work for all their lives. Other kinds of books were obviously also produced but the emphasis on the *Quran* in this reference to trade in books is understandable. For, save in a few cases where the demands of a patron might have been of a specific nature, this work of producing the holy text, though highly commercialized, fulfilled the need of all who had faith in it: the *Quran*

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became a standard commodity which could be produced, every thing done by hand, in large numbers, year after year. Variations in this kind of production can easily be thought of and understood: the quality of paper, the size, the script, the gilding if any, the binding, were all capable of being very different. But to a large number of potential buyers, a *Quran* must have been a *Quran*, to be paid for according to one's pocket, and not necessarily individually commissioned. This was one kind of book that could be secured without any personal contact between buyer and producer. There can be little doubt that the demand for scripted *Qurans*, in the original Arabic or in Persian translation, or Arabic with interlinear Persian text, in *naskh*, *nastaliq*, or *muhaqqaq* or *thulth*, gilded or ungilded, with illuminated pages and *sarlauhs* and *sura* headings and *unwans* in gold or colours, or gold and colours, must have come from well beyond Kashmir once the fame of Kashmiri scribes and gilders etc. was established.

Likewise, a limited number of other texts, such as had wide currency in the Islamic or Persian-reading world, must have been also produced in fair numbers, many of these illustrated with paintings, something that the holy text of the *Quran* would not admit of. In this case, when it came to a text of the *Diwan* of Hafiz or the *Kulliyat* of Sadi or the *Shahnama* of Firadausi, it is unlikely that the production was as 'impersonal' as it could have been in the case of the *Quran*. Individual contact between patron and scribes and illustrators is more likely to have been the case, the patron frequently determining the kind of manuscript he wanted for himself: illustrated or otherwise, illuminated or not; a large format or one that would fit in a pocket and so on. If this reconstruction of the situation as it might have obtained in the matter of book production is even partially correct – unfortunately one cannot locate any documents for supporting it – the professional groups, operating from their homes, not shops, can be thought of almost exactly in the same manner as shawl-makers, carpet weavers and the like did, developing a method, working out a system of production, with functions being distributed clearly within the group.

One is very close to envisioning the same situation that we have noticed obtaining in Shiraz in the seventeenth century where every household was engaged in producing books, members within the same family working as *katibs*, *mudhahhibs*, *musavvirs* and *mujallids*, etc. While production could be shared by women folk, as documented in Shiraz, however, the same could not be done if the groups of book producers became itinirent, moving from place to place.

There is some evidence to the effect that professionally itinerant groups of Kashmiri scribes came to be formed in large numbers. At least from the early years of this century there is oral information about such groups wandering about in the countryside of the Panjab. This information comes from Pandit Sthanu Dutt, a learned Sanskrit scholar of Kurukshetra, and is worth recording here in its entirety, for it has deep bearing on our understanding of how things might have operated.[40] Pandit Sthanu Dutt recalled, in the course of an interview, that in his childhood (at the turn of the century), practically every year, in the Haryana village to which he belonged, groups of three or four persons, all Kashmiris, would arrive with little bags, *bastas*, slung from their shoulder. They would enter the limits of the village and walk through, setting up a shout, like street-hawkers, saying '*katib, katib*' (meaning scribes), to announce that the scribes had arrived and were available for executing any commission of copying manuscripts. Occasionally, the group was larger than usual, consisting of four or five persons: the shout that went up then as they entered the village was '*katib mai musavvir*', meaning 'scribes together with a painter'. These professionals were offering their talents for the copying of any manuscripts. The fees were negligible. When a client wished a work to be copied either from his own collection or one that he could borrow from a neighbour or local pandit, he would hand it over to the scribes, after a price had been negotiated for the labour. With this was to be given,Pandit Sthanu Dutt recalled, a quantity of oil for burning the lamps by the

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light of which, into the night, the scribes kept working. The manuscript was taken to a *serai* or inn at the edge of the village where the group stayed. They carried everything with them, paper, writing instruments, ink, and the like; all the members of the group were trained so that they wrote often through the night, and brought out back the folios they had copied in the morning.

The entire manuscript was not handed over, Pandit Sthanu Dutt recalled, to the scribes at the same time. Only a few *patras* (folios) were given at one time for fear that the Kashmiris, whom no one knew personally, might make off with the manuscript. The next batch of folios would be handed over the next day, and so on, till the work was completed. Payments were made at the end of the assignment and the scribes would move on to the next village.

If there was a painter accompanying the scribes, he went about doing his job providing illustrations, one presumes, in the style that he had grown up with, and was trained in. The hand of the scribes was rigorously trained, all conventions and method having been carefully worked out, as was the style of the painter accompanying the group. Apparently these groups went around especially in the winter season. Pt. Sthanu Dutt's childhood memory is of their walking about in *bukkals*—heavy wraps around their bodies indicating winter when he first saw them—an information of much interest because it tallies perfectly with the situation that obtains even now in northern India: in the winter, when the Kashmir valley is cold and covered with snow, embroiderers, carpet sellers, and shawl weavers come down in large numbers, going from house to house in the towns, This is reminiscent again also of the descent of the *pandas* of Mattan in Kashmir, priests who keep records of the visits of pilgrims at Mattan or Martand and who come down annually to visit their clients with their *bahis* or registers slung in *bastas*.[41] This is the *panda's* '*jajmani*' tour when they collect money or gifts from their *yajamana*-clients.

Finally, Pt. Sthanu Dutt mentioned that there were different rates of payments for the scribes—one for ordinary copying and the other for '*hartal-ki-likhai*', writing which has been corrected by the application of a thin, opaque layer of *hartal*, a yellow orpiment used as a correcting fluid. It is worth mentioning that Pandit Sthanu Dutt did not understand the meaning of the Persian word *musavvir* when he gave this information and all he remembered was the sound of the group hawking its skills, that he had heard as a child. The scribes were, according to him, not truly literate, but they were very skilled at copying precisely what they saw on the folio in front of them on to sheets of the Kashmiri paper that they carried with them. The assumption is that because of this they transferred all the original manuscripts' imperfections on to the copy that they made. This recalls very strongly to the mind the observation made about Shiraz of women scribes copying from a manuscript without understanding what it contained, working like a painter, transferring letters.[42] This also helps explain the inclusion of the standard formulas often entered by scribes at the end of the work begging the forgiveness of the reader for their imperfections and disclaiming any responsibility for errors that they might have copied from an original.[43]

The information recorded from Pandit Sthanu Dutt is extremely valuable, for it explains several things while drawing attention to a tradition that once flourished but is now completely lost. Every single detail furnished by Pandit Sthanu Dutt may not have been accurate, relying as he was on the memory of a time that lay far back in the past, and possibly adding to it from the vantage point of age and experience. But, in its essentials, there is a deep ring of authenticity to the account. If anything, one has to fill in some gaps oneself and pose questions to which the tradition as recorded does not provide adequate answers. How many scripts could the Kashmiris copy? What was the situation concerning illumination? Concerning binding? Were the Kashmiri groups all of Muslims? Or were there occasionally groups of Hindu scribes that came in? If only a few folios were handed over to the copyists at a time, what happened to bound manuscripts that

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needed to be made copies of? Did the painters accompanying the group copy paintings from illustrated manuscripts given to them, or did they put in their own illustrations as they thought appropriate? Could they be asked to insert illustrations in a copy even when the original was unillustrated? Did the illuminators work at the same speed as the scribes so that the group finished its work at the same time? Could the painter keep pace with the other members of the group if the number of illustrations was large? Could the scribes also paint? Or painters write?

One may never be able to know the answers, but these are the kind of questions on which some of our understanding of the Kashmir situation as it obtained in book-production would depend.

Clearly, the intinerant Kashmiri scribes and painters of the kind preserved in Pandit Sthanu Dutt's memory represented only one category of craftsmen concerned with the writing, painting and making of books. it would be reasonable to assume that the work they did was of a routine kind, competent if not especially distinguished. One can think of other situations, involving more gifted scribes, more skilled painters, more refined gilders, working for serious patrons on projects of considerable proportions rather than hawking their skills from village to village in the winters. But this tradition of 'itinerancy' helps explain, in a manner that nothing else does, the extraordinary spatial spread of Kashmiri copies of works that one encounters in the whole of Northern India. Added to this is the additional factor that these scribes seem to have developed skills in writing a whole range of scripts. One hears of serious calligraphers who prided themselves on being *haft qalami*, commanding control over seven different styles of writing[44] The Kashmiri scribes may not have been *haft qalamis*, but one is struck by the number of scripts that one comes upon in Kashmir manuscripts, illustrated or otherwise. Persian apart—this is the script that one first associates with the scribes of the valley—there are works written in Sharada, the early script of Kashmir, in Devanagari, Gurmukhi, the Rajasthani version of Devanagari and, in one case, Pushto which employs a slightly different version of the Persian script. The languages also naturally vary from Persian to Sanskrit and Panjabi and Urdu. Throughout the Panjab a large number of Kashmiri scripted works in Gurmukhi, including the *Guru Granth Sahib*, were produced in great numbers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some Kashmiri families possibly having specialised in the script. It is on the basis of their style of paintings and illumination that one is able to attribute a wide range of works to Kashmiri hands.

It is of interest to notice colophons and owners' notes on books in the Kashmiri style, now spread over so many parts of India. In Kashmir itself, quite naturally, a great deal was produced. In the north-western part of the Panjab and in Afghanistan, Kashmiri works in Punjabi, Persian, Sanskrit and Pushto were regularly produced. One locates Kashmiri works in private collections also throughout the hill states that were formerly under the control of the rajas, and now form part of Himachal Pradesh or Jammu and Kashmir. In private hands, not at the level of royalty but of common folk, men who were *jyotishis, pujaris, vaidyas, kayasthas,* even shop keepers and the like, Kashmiri works scripted and illustrated are to be seen, throughout the Kangra valley for instance. At Kangra, Nurpur, Jwalamukhi, Samloti, Mandi, Kulu, Naggar, thus, I saw in the course of field-work in 1964 a large number of private collections with manuscripts that were distinctly Kashmiri.[45] The works were generally of an undistinguished kind, but had been preserved as family heirlooms that passed from generation to generation, as prayer books that had sustained men for two hundred years or more. Wherever one went, at Jakhbar, a Jogi establishment near Pathankot in the Panjab,[46] at Kartarpur in Jullundur district, at Patiala—places ranging from large towns with a royal past, to small, wayside villages—Kashmiri works would turn up.[47] The collection of Kashmiri manuscripts in the Kurukshetra University

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Library comes, according to the records available, from private owners in small Haryana towns, Kaithal, Taraori, Thanesar and the like, many of them in the neighbourhood of Kurukshetra.[48] A manuscript of Yusuf and Zuleikha (see P. 50) bears, for example, a long note on the fly -leaf indicating that it was once in the possession of a Muslim family of Kunjpura, a small Muslim pocket near Karnal in Haryana.[49]

A distinguished Sanskrit manuscript of prayer texts was purchased by Georg Reinhart of Winterthur in Switzerland, according to a note on its fly-leaf, in Agra;[50] another manuscript to which Losty draws attention was copied by "Ghasi Ram Kashmiri" in Banares.[51] In Jaipur, a whole colony of Kashmiri gilders and scribes seems to have been active.[52] A Persian manuscript of the *Bhagvadgita* was purchased in Lahore according to a note on the fly-leaf by a person based in Moradabad.[53] Information of this order is considerable, and if this brief sample of the range of places where Kashmiri manuscripts turn up is any indication, the area over which the painters and scribes operated must have been truly extensive. A whole group of Kashmir manuscripts, now in the Institute of Oriental Studies, Leningrad to which W.R. Rishi has drawn attention[54] comes from families of Hindu and Sikh traders settled in Central Asia. It would be fair to say that from Kabul to the eastern parts of Uttai Pradesh, and from Central Asia down to the ends of lower Rajasthan, Kashmiri works were known, and were often scripted and painted at the very places that they now are, by itinerant artists.

While writing of the art of the book in India, Losty draws attention to an important but much neglected aspect of the study of Indian art.[55] It was not often that, according to him, Hindu patrons "demanded from their scribes and illuminators, as well as their painters, the standards which Muslim patrons expected as of right". It was only when such demands were made that "Hindu manuscripts approached in quality those of Persian manuscripts, for no matter how much critical attention they paid to the paintings in their manuscripts, Hindu patrons had very low standards of expectation from their scribes.... Until, in fact, Hindus were willing to treat calligraphy as a serious art, no improvements along these lines could be expected. It was in Kashmir that standards were first established in this field." Again, to quote Losty, "in Kashmir . . . Hindu manuscript illumination came closest to Muslim. They adopted the same format as Muslim manuscripts, the bound volume, with the text, beautifully written by Kashmiri scribes, in an elegant *Nagari* within gilded and coloured margins in a central panel, on fine paper, with border decorations of floral subjects around miniatures, and in one manuscript at least (No. 126), uniquely, an attempt at the *hashiyas* illuminated in gold as in Mughal manuscripts. The typical Kashmiri illumination of *sarlauh*, and *unwan*, broad bands in gold, blue and pink providing the ground for arabesques and flowers, a style based on a certain strand of Mughal illuminations found as early as the 1570 *Anvar-i Suhayli*—is found as the frontispiece to Hindu and Muslim manuscripts alike. The elegance of the *Nagari* script found in fine-quality Kashmiri manuscripts is unique in India; only Jaipur manuscripts can compare with it, but here the scribes were often Kashmiri anyway. They revived the ancient practice of writing with gold and silver ink on blue and black paper... a characteristic of Nepalese manuscripts but not seen in Indian manuscripts before".

Jaipur seems, in particular, to have attracted Kashmiri talent, and under Maharaja Jai Singh II (1700-43), the celebrated builder of the city of Jaipur, with the commissioning of fine work for the state's already well-stocked *Pothikhana*, "the standards prevailing in Kashmir (were brought) to the plains." Losty speaks of a new drive on the part of the Hindu patrons, "to have manuscripts of the Hindu sacred texts as beautiful and as elegant as copies of the *Koran*, . . . the number of texts finely illuminated in this way is small, principally, the *Bhagavadgita* with its associated smaller texts, ... the *Devi Mahatmya*, and some Shaiva *stotras* while the *Gitagovinda*, ... though more a poetic than religious text,

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was also so treated". [56]

What Losty does not mention in this context is the exquisite work done by Kashmiri scribes and illuminators in fine copies of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Some exceptional work was done in the Panjab, and even if relatively little has survived, from these survivals a fair idea can be formed of the quality of workmanship that was brought to their task by the Kashmiri scribes and gilders. This work was spread over large areas where Sikh shrines were located and devout Sikhs were settled, from Central Asia to Patna and Nanded. Illustrated copies of the *Guru Granth Sahib* were not favoured,—a few copies had some paintings 'appended' to them,—but the *Janam Sakhis* may well have been painted by the very painters who belonged to the groups of scribes and gilders who undertook such commissions.

III

ARTISTS AND PATRONS

In keeping with the general situation obtaining in Indian art, there is remarkably little information available on the Kashmiri painters. In fact the information here is decidedly poorer even than, for instance, in the area of Pahari or Rajasthani painting; and there is certainly nothing here approaching the documentation we have for Mughal painting. The families from whose descendants much information has come in the case of Pahari painting[57] have no parallels in Kashmir. It is possible that the Kashmiri painter families have died out completely. Certainly, there is no work being done now in painting in Kashmir save for occasional figural work on papier-mache objects. But this work today is largely unrelated to Kashmiri paintings of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and seems to be inspired, like a tourist craft, once again by Persian painting, of a late Qajar kind.[58] If the families of Kashmiri painters did not actually die out, the likelihood is that they became merged in the general craftsmen groups engaged in shawl-making or carpet-making or papier-mache work. This possibility is especially strong if the painters had in the first instance emerged from that class of craftsmen, like the Pahari painters had from the carpenter groups.[59]

To pursue this thought further: the *naqqash* or draughtsmen/designers were common to the crafts mentioned and to painting, and it would not be surprising if the painters had originally emerged from that group. If so, once the art of painting approached extinction due to the rise and popularity of different technologies, it was perhaps easy and natural for painters and gilders to return to their roots, and merge once again with the large category. From the seventeenh and eighteenth centuries when we can begin tracing the development of Kashmiri painting in illustrated manuscripts, there are no names of artists whatsoever that are available. All that we have by way of names of painters are those that lived much further back in the past: Bhidhaka who is mentioned as one of the craftsmen designing works at the asking of Rinchen bzangpo,[60] or Hasuraja mentioned by Taranath as the founder of 'the Kashmir school'.[61] Only one painter's name that of Mulla Jamil mentioned by Abu'l Fazl,[62] comes our way over a period of centuries. By and large, the painters of the manuscripts, even as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth century are but a faint memory at this point, virtually nothing else being known about them. It is believed that they came mostly from the Muslim sections of Kashmiri society, and were Shias by persuasion, much like the papier-mache makers. This is cited in part explanation of the fact that among the Muslims in general, Shias, like those in Iran, had fewer reservations about doing figural work of any kind than Sunnis had, and that in papier-mache often some figural work was involved.[63]

The silence around the painters is considerable and some possible leads do

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not take us far. Thus, the painters of the early murals of Kashmir, like those of Ladakh, seem mainly to have come from the Mons group. However, this group, not being known in the valley, had almost certainly nothing to do with turning out works of the Kashmiri kind on paper. Again, there is no information that has survived concerning the ritualistic paintings done by the Pandits in their own homes or for selected clients. Not a single name emerges from the known histories of Kashmir. It is possible that the painters of this category did not even perceive themselves as painters at a professional level. Nothing is in fact known about them except, broadly, that they were once active.

From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we have a few names of scribes, but of no one clearly identifiable as a painter, save one. From one colophon, thus, one can glean the name of Nizam who worked as a scribe on an illustrated manuscript of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi in the National Museum, New Delhi (Acc. No. L. 532/5): in this colophon Nizam speaks of his having prepared this *nuskha* in the year A.H. 1246/A.D. An illustrated manuscript of the *Bustan* of Sadi also in the National Museum, New Delhi (Acc. No. 56.2/5). mentions that it was done in the hand of this 'lowly mendicant, Nizam-ud-din', in the year A.H. 1244/A.D.. There are similar other colophons, but there is no way of being certain whether the craftsmen mentioned in them are simply scribes or also painters and/or illuminators of the works. The name of one Muslim painter, Mahmud (inscribed as *aml-i Mahmud*) occurs in an obscure little corner of a painting in a *Diwan-i-Hafiz* copy, now in a private collection in Switzerland.[64] Since this 'signature' is not that of *katib* or scribe, and is featured on the body of a painting, it cannot but be the name of a painter. Taken together, the information is pitifully little, but in the state of our present knowledge, the gaps cannot be filled.

The situation in respect of manuscripts of Hindu texts written in Persian is also no different. There is some possibility that the well-known late nineteenth century calligraphers, Pandit Raja Ram Tota and his father, were also painters. The manner in which Pandit Raja Ram brings in his name on the opening leaf of a *Ragamala* book, now in the National Museum, does not raise a question, for he not only writes exquisitely but uses white pigments with which to do it,[65] something that only a painter would be able to do well. If Pandit Raja Ram, his father, or his son, all of whom are known from colophons were not mere scribes, and also did some painting in the manuscripts that they scripted,[66] then we have some names of painters. But as hard information this still remains unsatisfactory.

Of the patrons of Kashmiri painting—one should in fact speak of 'clients' rather than patrons because of the context in which these paintings were generally produced—we know a trifle more than we do about the painters. Here, however, the most striking fact is that the patronage of Kashmiri painting, as far as it is ascertainable, came not from the royalty, or members of the nobility, but from the middle class, in which figured traders, minor court functionaries, Pandits etc. No manuscript has surfaced upto now which was commissioned by a king, a ruler or a nawab. From this angle alone, it is possible to see Kashmiri painting as 'non-elitist work'—bourgeois painting, in a fashion. One says this in awareness of the fact that nothing of the royal library of the Sultans of Kashmir seems to have survived.[67] Undoubtedly, the library must have been extensive considering the number of names of poets and writers from Kashmir that have survived in the writings of chroniclers and later historians. It is fair to presume that many works belonging to these authors were scripted and entered the royal library. But whether these were illustrated, we have no information on. One is not even certain that the Sultans of Kashmir encouraged or tolerated illustrated works. The only circumstantial evidence available is that while poets and writers are listed in chronicles, there is no mention of painters or their works in royal collections.[68] It is on this count that one arrives at the tentative conclusion that the activity of painting in Kashmir was more at the popular, middle-class level than at that of royalty.

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When the power of the Kashmir Sultans was replaced by that of the Afghans there is no evidence again of any official patronage extended to painting. In the Afghan regime the other crafts, despite all the oppression linked with the period, continued to survive. But of painting at the royal or gubernatorial level no trace has survived. Under the Sikhs, from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, evidence is lacking yet again. As far as work in the Kashmir valley is concerned, there are occasional references to other crafts being encouraged and valued, including the amusing story of General Mehan Singh having a large carpet specially made to evoke the atmosphere and scenery of Kashmir for Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was unable to make the journey to Kashmir despite his longing to do so.[69] But no information concerning official patronage of painting is available. It is not unlikely that much work, especially illumination, was done for Sikh patrons, because a sizeable Sikh population, in a position of power, had settled in Kashmir after the establishment of Sikh supremacy there. One can envisage illuminated copies of the *Guru Granth Sahib* being made in large numbers for Sikh patrons in the valley, the local craftsmen all too eager to accept commissions. There may even have been illustrated manuscripts of the *Janam Sakhis* and other texts made in the valley, but no documentation exists to corroborate this.

When the painters worked in the plains, one hears of books written and illustrated for the Maharaja.[70] Some patronage can thus be taken to have come 'from the state' in this brief period, but no direct relationship seems to emerge from an examination of documents. It is difficult to see Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a patron of Kashmiri painting in the manner in which Akbar can be seen as a patron of painters of the Mughal court or Govardhan Chand or Sansar Chand as patrons of painters of Guler or Kangra.

Here one needs to add a note concerning "royal patronage" of Kashmiri painters. We do have evidence of course of Kashmiri painters employed at the Mughal court in the sixteenth and early seventeeth centuries, when we come upon the names, among others, of Kamal, Haider, Yaqub, Muhammad and Ismail "Kashmiri"—painters evidently drawn from Kashmir who worked on royal manuscripts like the *Timur-nama* or the *Babar nama*, as noticed before.[71] Kamal Kashmiri also worked on the *Ramayana* painted for the *Khan-i Khanan*. But this work can scarcely be designated as Kashmiri having been assimilated to 'Mughal work' and strictly controlled by the *ustads* of the Imperial *karkhanas*. The presence of Muhammad Nadir Samarqandi in Kashmir, or other painters who worked for Zafar Khan in Kashmir[72] during the reign of Shah Jahan, only indicate a presence. There was, thus, patronage at an elevated level, but either the painters or the patrons of this kind of work were Mughals. Perhaps both.

At the sub-royal level, it is possible to see high dignataries at the Lahore court in the nineteenth century offering some patronage. Many men in high positions were drawn there from Kashmir, mostly from Pandit families, and it is not difficult to conceive of some of them commissioning works from temporarily resident Kashmiri painters. Dewan Ajudhya Prasad, fond of Persian learning, for instance, seems to have maintained a library of some proportions.[73] The illustrated copy of the *Qissa-i Chahar Dervesh* (See M. 25) prepared for him may not be a Kashmiri work *per see* but it has a Kashmiri input. Similarly, other works may have been done for him, some of them possibly by Kashmiri artists exclusively. Once again, however, one only guesses in the absence of documentation.

The materials for the study of Kashmir painting are so widely scattered, and so far so little studied, that it is hazardous to make any statements of a definitive nature on any aspect: origins, styles, painters or patrons. It is possible that more information will become available with the publication of more documents. In the state of our present knowledge, however, all that emerges from colophons and notes on fly leafs of illustrated manuscripts that have any documentation at all, are, as stated before, names of merchants, minor functionaries etc. as patrons

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for whom commissioned work was done. The colophons employ exaggerated titles or honorifics for the patrons: but this belongs to the category of flattery by the scribe, following the usual formulas. Close analysis of the information contained in the colophons reveals many of the patrons, despite descriptions such as 'Khan of Khans' or 'Malik-ul Tajjar', to be essentially traders and merchants.

The Pushto manuscript in the Victoria Memorial (see M. 26) was written for Khan Yusufzai, but his designation beyond this is not recorded. The manuscript of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi in the National Museum was written for "Aqa Muhammad Kazim, son of the late Hajji Muhammad Baqir" who is identified as a trader of Ispahan.[74] It is another matter that this very manuscript later entered the library of an Ahluwalia chief of Kapurthala, Sardar Nihal Singh, through purchase.[75] The finely painted two volume *Ram Charitmanas* in the National Museum has a mention, on the fly leaf, that the owner who may possibly even have been the person commissioning the manuscript, was one "Barkat Ram son of Jwala Sahai, Brahmin of the Dhami Gosain order, resident in the village of Rajpur in the Hafizabad tehshil of the Gujranwala" district of Panjab.[76]

The manuscript of the *Shahnama-i Shamshirkhani*, and that of the *Ram Geeti Katha,* in the National Museum, each carry a note on the fly-leaf saying that they belonged to "Pandit Wazir Chand Trikha" who is not identified any further.[77] One Sodhi Bhan seems to have taken much interest in painting, the splendid large folios in the National Museum, and a copy of the *Gurbilas* in Leningrad both mentioning his name.[78] The former, in fact, shows the Sodhi himself, offering prayers. No further information concerning Sodhi Bhan Singh who seems to have been a serious patron, is available, but it is fair to guess that he belonged to one of the major Sodhi families, descended from the Sikh Gurus. The name of Raja Krishan Kumar emerges from a fly-leaf of the Bhagavadgita in Persian translation in the National Museum. (M. 190) He was an official stationed in Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh,[79] and it is for him that the copy was purchased in Lahore through Munshi Narsing Rai for eight rupees.[80] A *Bustan* of Sadi (National Museum, 56.2/5), was written for 'Aqa Muhammad Ismail' who is described as the 'Prince of traders' by the writer of the colophon.[81]

The information available at present is essentially of this order. Scanty as it is, it is of great interest even if it may not eventually prove to be wholly representative or descriptive of the situation that prevailed in respect of patronage of Kashmir painting. One thing seems to be reasonably certain: the payments must have been very small, if the price paid for the finely painted copy of the *Bhagavadgita,*—eight rupees—is any indication. The value of manuscripts is not generally recorded. But perhaps even a stray piece of information like this provides a brief glimpse into that world of want and miserable payments to which so many visitors to Kashmir in the nineteenth century draw attention in connection with the condition of the craftsmen there.[82] The values of shawls may have run into fancy sums but the craftsman got only a pitiful share of it. When one reads of so many of "maunds of Korans" being exported from Kashmir to Ladakh at the rate of 13 rupees per maund, one winces at the fact that hand-written manuscripts were thus weighed and priced. What this meant for quality can easily be surmised.

Notes

1. One tends generally to see each craft in isolation but, if seen collectively, from objects belonging to these different categories, a distinct vocabulary of designs, a range of motifs, can be seen as emerging. It is sometimes easy to tell a Kashmiri work on sight, and that largely because of the placing of motifs, detailing, colouring, and the overall sense of composition reflected in the work.
2. Anand Koul, 1925, 20.

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3. *Ibid.*, 22. Eighteen thousand *avikams* are mentioned in the *Mahabharata* as being proposed to be presented to Krishna. These are taken to be "shawls of hilly country", obviously meaning Kashmir, by Anand Koul.
4. Abu'l Fazl, *Ain,* I, 97ff. The improvement of the department of shawls by Akbar is what Abu'l Fazl concentrates upon in the opening lines of the chapter, especially describing the *Tus* shawl which "is unrivalled for its lightness, warmth and softness". Abu'l Fazl adds that "His Majesty encourages, in every possible way, the manufacture of shawls in Kashmir."
5. *Ibid.*, I 97-8.
6. For an excellent monograph on shawls, citing these and other Europeans' references to Kashmir shawls, see Irwin, 1955.
7. Thomas Roe, 223-24.
8. Moorcroft's is without doubt the most detailed of information on Kashmiri shawls that we have from the nineteenh century. Apart from the published account of his *Travels* in which he devotes considerable attention to the shawls of Kashmir, he left behind elaborate notes in the form of manuscripts to which Irwin, 1955, 52, draws detailed attention. These manuscripts are now in the India Office Library, London.
9. Moorcroft, MSS. EUR. G. 28, letter dated 12 November, 1822,cited in Irwin, 1955, 13.
10. It was mentioned to me by Dr. V.C. Ohri who was told by an embroiderer that the design is essentially based on the side imprint of the human hand half-curled into a fist and applied with pigments on a wall.
11. Moorcroft, 190-91.
12. *Idem.*
13. *Idem.*
14. *Ibid.*, 382.
15. Anand Koul, 1925, 24.
16. Irwin, 7.
17. India Office Library, Oriental vol. 71. The drawings in this volume are described as being "painted by a native artist", circa 1823.
18. Anand Koul, 1925, 45-52.
19. *bid.*, 48.
20. *Idem.*
21. There is a Kamangar Mohalla in Srinagar where the *naqqashes* are said to have lived at one time, in concentration. It is interesting to recall to one's mind the fact that Kamangars, literally 'bow-makers', were traditionally associated in many parts of India with painting, their skill originally being lavished on lacquered and painted bows and arrows, and then expanding to cover figurative and decorative work on paper in the form of paintings. The paintings of Kutch, for example, came from the Kamangar group. See B.N. Goswamy and Dallapiccola, 1983. In Basohli, painting seems to have been influenced by the influx of 'Kamagger', obviously Kamangar, craftsmen, in the seventeenth century, according to Pandit Sansar Chand, former curator of the Dogra Art Gallery at Jammu.
22. It is pertinent here to remark on the fact that the Shia community was not only in a distinct minority among the Muslims of Kashmir; it also suffered at the hands of some Muslim rulers, like the Afghans in the eighteenth century, along with the Hindus. One wonders if this had something to do with their being engaged in figurative work that was unacceptable to orthodox Muslims.
23. Moorcroft, 367.
24. *Ibid.*, 396.
25. Anand Koul, 1925, 38-9.
26. *Ibid.*, 39.
27. *Ibid.*, 40.
28. *Ibid.*, 40-3.
29. Abul Fazl, *Ain,* I, 103.
30. *Ibid.*, I, 109.
31. *Idem.*
32. Ehtaram-ud-din Ahmed, 1963, 156-57. There is a portrait of Muhammad Husain Zarrin Qalam', together with the painter Manohar, on the colophon page of a Gulistan manuscript in the Royal Asiatic Society, London, Persian MS. 258. For a reproduction see, A. Welch, 1979, No. 76, colour plate.
33. 963, 165.

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34. Abdul Halim Sharar.
35. *Ibid.*,
36. This volume was formerly in the collection of the library attached to the Raghunath temple at Jammu. The calligraphy and the illumination in the volume are truly distinguished.
37. Coomaraswamy, 1916, I, 24.
38. Moorcroft, 386-8, gives a very detailed account of the system of manufacture.
39. See, Bates, reprint 1980, 90. Two hundred and fifty four maunds of "books and Korans (*kitab*, Koran)" are listed as item 18, exported into Leh via Kashmir during 1872 valued at Rs. 3422/12 annas and 3 pies.
40. Pandit Sthanu Dutt who retired as the librarian of the manuscript section of the Kurukshetra University Library came himself from a priestly family of Haryana and, till a certain point in his career, had occupied himself only with priestly functions. The substance of the information that I recorded in the course of a long interview with him I have already published elsewhere (Karuna Goswamy, 1985-86, 86-95.) Pandit Sthanu Dutt's memory, it needs to be mentioned, was remarkably clear and there was no change in the details of his recollection over a period of time. I had occasion to interview him more than once after a gap of some years.
41. The visit of the Mattan pandas with client families each year used to be an event awaited with a sense of anticipation, for the pandas would often bring small gifts or *prasad* from the holy place. They naturally received gifts and payments in return.
42. An interesting parallel is cited by Ajit Singh of Chamba who recalls that Vijay Sharma, a well-known miniature painter from Chamba, was when very young able to copy an unfamiliar script like Urdu perfectly without knowing a single letter of the alphabet. Evidently, his gifts in drawing were such that he was able to script letters, while copying as if he were drawing.
43. The formulae used by copyists in the Persian or the Sanskrit tradition are well-known and extremely interesting. Almost always the copyist invokes in them divine blessings upon the author, the reader and the copyist, but also disclaims any responsibility for errors, stating that "I have copied the text exactly as I found it, whether perfect or imperfect".
44. One such calligrapher, Maulana Ghulam Muhammad of Delhi, 'Haft Qalami', is listed in Ehtaram-ud-din Ahmad Shaghil, 143.
45. Most of these collections were sub-royal; some of these I saw at religious establishments like Pindori, Damtal; some at entirely unexpected places. For all practical purposes a *gutka* of prayers meant a Kashmiri *gutka*, often at least with some rudimentary illumination if not any illustrations.
46. I saw the manuscripts through the courtesy of the late Mahant Shankar Nathji of Jakhbar.
47. Sri Jai Raghunandan Das Shastri of Pindori was very kind in gaining for me access to a number of illustrated manuscripts.
48. I was able to consult manuscripts in the Kurukshetra University libraries through the help of Sri Pinakapani Sharma, son of Pandit Sthanu Dutt. who holds charge of the manuscripts.
49. See, *infra*, P. 50, in the section on manuscripts.
50. See, *infra*, M. 14. The manuscript was purchased in 1927.
51. Losty, 145. The text is of the *Adhyatma Ramayana* and the manuscript, dateable to the early 19th century, is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
52. See, Losty, 121. Losty speaks of Maharajas of Jaipur commissioning "new first-class work for their already well-stocked *pothikhana*, and to bring the standards prevailing in Kashmir to the plains."
53. See, *infra*, M. 19.
54. See, *supra*, II, note 82.
55. Losty, 119. His account, though brief, makes the point with great clarity and emphasis.
56. *Ibid.*, 120.
57. A great deal has been published based on the oral information recorded from the living descendants of families of great Pahari painters. For a useful summing up, see, Goswamy and Fischer, 1992.
58. The work that one sees now on papier-mache objects in the state emporia of Kashmir, both in the valley and in other major cities of India, is undoubtedly inspired by late Persian, Qajar-like work.

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59. The painters came largely from the '*tarkhan-chitrera*' groups, meaning carpenter-painters. It is interesting to see as to how many paintings exist in which the painters render artistic wood-work in palace architecture etc. with feeling, as if remembering their origins.
60. Pal, 1982, 20.
61 Taranath, 348.
62. *Ain,* II, 383.
63. This is especially true of larger objects, like shields, trays and tables. Whole *darbar* or hunting scenes are sometimes seen painted on such objects.
64. This copy is now in the possession of a family, in Kilchberg, near Zurich.
65. The use of the white pigment is so refined that a painter's *qalam* comes to the mind. Scribes did not ordinarily use white pigment, and perhaps would have had difficulty in handling it. One thinks in this connection of the *Takri* inscriptions on some paintings of Balwant Singh of Jasrota which are placed on the paintings undoubtedly by his artist, Naisukh, See, Goswamy and Fischer, 1992,
66. See, *supra,* chap. II, note 77. R.P. Shrivastava and S.P. Shrivastava clearly take the view that these scribe calligraphers of the Tota family also illustrated the manuscripts that they scripted.
67. See, Mohibb-ul Hassan, 91: "In this way the Sultan (Zain-ul abidin) built up a big library which existed until the time of Fath Shah. It perished in the civil wars and foreign invasions of the later Shah Mir period. "
68. The mention of Mulla Jamil, who was both a musician and a painter, by Abu'l Fazl (see, *supra,* chap. II, note 36) and a book of illustrations of the anatomy of the human body. The *Tashrih bit-Taswir,* by Mansur b. Muhammad, in the time of Zainul abidin are the two exceptions one can think of. The latter is mentioned by Mohibb-ul Hassan, 89, but even here Mansur seems to have been the author of the work and not necessarily its illustrator.
69. Anand Koul, 1925, 40.
70. One knows, thus, of works like the *Zafarnama* of Ranjit Singh, the *Gulgasht-i Panjab,* a military manual for Ranjit Singh's army, the *Tarikh-i-dilkusha,* the *Iqbalnama-i Ranjit Singh,* being among the works written and illustrated for Maharaja Ranjit Singh. See, S.P. Srivastava, 70-5.
71 See, *supra,* Ch. II, notes 43, 48.
72. See, *supra,* Ch II, note 54.
73. An illustrated copy of the *Qissa-i Chabar Darvesh,* (See *infra,* M. 25 in the section on manuscripts) was not obviously a lone work owned by Diwan Ayudhya Prasad. A number of works from his library were donated to the Panjab University by Diwan Anand Kumar.
74. See, *infra,* M.11 in the section of manuscripts.
75. No other manuscript from the library of Sardar Nihal Singh has yet come to light. But from the tone of the note it would appear that he was a serious collector of books.
76. See, *infra,* M. 11. in the section on manuscripts.
77. See, *infra,* , M. 10 in the section on manuscripts.
78. See, *supra,* M. 21., in the section on manuscripts.
79. See, *infra,* M. 19 in the section on manuscripts.
80 S.P. Srivastava (1991, 105-06) draws attention to a manuscript scripted by Pandit Raja Ram Kaul Tota in 1856 which has a note at the end saying that it was copied for one Lala Das Mal at Lahore in 1856-57.
81. See, *infra,* M. 7 in the section of manuscripts.
82. S.P. Srivastava records information on payments to artist from a manuscript of the *Zafar-Nama-i-Ranjit Singh* written by Diwan Amar Nath and scripted by Pandit Raja Ram Koul Tota who was referred to as Brahmin Kashmiri. The information in the version of the manuscript edited by Sita Ram Kohli mentions that the binder was given Rs.10/- and Abdullah the book binder got Rs. $2^1/_2$ for his labour. See, Shrivastava, 1991, 106; also see, Hugel, 20; Abdul Ahad, 51.

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Chapter Five

KASHMIRI MANUSCRIPTS: A Selection

M. 1. AN ANTHOLOGY OF RITUAL TEXTS
Coll: National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 91.1/348.

The text being incomplete, the exact number of pages is not known, 10.5 cm. x 7.5 cm; light brown Sialkoti paper; Sanskrit in Sharada script; 11 lines on a page within a panel, with gold black and red margins; 10 paintings, averaging 7.5 cm. x 4.5 cm in size; most of them with text above and below; no illumination; modern covers in cloth; no date or place name in colophon.

A large number of ritual texts, consisting of *mantras, stotras, japavidhis* etc. are collected together in this anthology. The texts are:

Rudramantra
Bhavanisahasranama
Sarikastotra
Ragyistava
Sarika kavacha
Ganapati mantra
Mahadevajapavidhi
Mahimnaparastotra
Kushmanda patha
Bandhmochana stotra
Suka stotra
Shani stotra
Rahu/Ketu stotra

This copy was evidently used for reciting from, or as an aid in the performance of specific rituals. The range of *stotras* especially towards the end consist of texts for the avoidance of ill-luck, appeasement of malevolent deities, removal of obstacles, deliverence from misfortunes etc. At the same time, however, there are also relatively straightforward short texts for daily prayer and recitation. That the volume was in active use is clear not only from its poor state owing to its being well-thumbed, but also from the ritual marks made with saffron or ochre on certain folios, apparently as a part of the ritual of paying homage to the written texts themselves. It is easy to envisage special attention being paid to a copy like this on a day when learning as embodied in sacred texts received homage.

There is no name of scribe; no date or place name in colophon. It is not unlikely that the text was scripted by a user himself, possibly a member of a Kashmiri pandit family. It is simple work; there is no attempt at embellishment, no illumination etc. in the copy.

The few illustrations that are interspersed in the text are essentially iconic in character and, from their look, are unlikely to have been the work of a professional painter. There is some suggestion in the form of short captions in Persian on some folios that the painter was different from the scribe of this work. At some places a painting cuts across its margins on to the text above which indicates that the text was written first and the paintings put in later. The paintings are simple, direct images, being visualisations of the deities invoked or celebrated in the various texts. The texts themselves being of a mixed character—Shakta, Shaiva or Vaishnava—the paintings too partake of the same character. In

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a terse, small image, thus, Shiva and Parvati are rendered astride the bull Nandi against a flat red and green background, with no embellishment or definition of landscape at all. In another leaf, a four-armed goddess, *khadaga* and spear in different hands and a snake entwined around her neck, sits lightly, as in most Kashmiri paintings, atop a prostrate corpse of a man, her form barely touching the lying figure; certainly placing no weight upon it. In a bold, very folkish rendering on a page with no text, the Goddess is shown, 18-armed, prominently carrying lotuses in two hands, seated cross-legged on a purple and mauve-petalled lotus full-blown which rests lightly on the back of a tiger. The work is much damaged but evocative, directly suggestive of the powers that are at the Goddess's command.

A very similar lotus is seen in another work, illustrating the Vaishnava text in which Vishnu, blue-bodied, yellow-garmented, four-armed is seated cross-legged with the goddess Lakshmi in his lap. The whole arrangement is like a floral carpet; the background is a yellowish green; nothing else is indicated. A surprise is afforded by a tiny little illustration on one of the folios, showing a lotus blossoming in a small pond placed between lines of the text above and below. The text here deals with the goddess Chandi; at the bottom of the text panel, a line in a neat, small hand, invokes the goddess Saraswati. The illustration is wholly unusual, being neither pure decoration nor icon. The lotus here evidently draws attention to an aspect of the goddess who figures in the ritual text. Like the rest of the illustrations in this simple, much-used volume, this work is direct, unpretentious, but possessed of a certain power. The manuscript is difficult to date for the images are of a 'timeless' kind—but it may well belong to the second half of the eighteenth century.

M. 2. *The Devi Mahatmya* and other texts:
Private Collection.

Number of folios unknown; 13.7 cm x 9.2 cm; no part of the text has survived; 8 paintings which could be seen as forming a series, each placed within a rectangular frame of finely painted borders with a running flower and creeper motif, and edged by broad rules in yellow; each painting now mounted on a thick cardboard-like sheet; no *sarlauh*; no covers; no date or colophon.

The eight paintings that have survived and can now be seen to form a series, belonged once, undoubtedly, to a manuscript, the entire text of which is now lost. From the tiny inscription on a manuscript folio held in Brahma's hand in one of the paintings, it may be surmised that the lost text was in Sharada, this inscription being in that script. The vertical format of the paintings is slightly unusual, because if one is correctly guessing at the nature of the manuscript, which may have been an anthology of prayer texts, this format would suggest a later date than the usual *pothi*-format in which prayer texts were written and bound. Of the eight paintings six relate to the Great Goddess: the principal text in the anthology may thus well have been the *Devi Mahatmya*. The paintings are not only iconic in character but have a narrative, sequential content celebrating the great exploits of the Goddess against demon hordes. The other two paintings, one depicting Krishna and Arjuna in a chariot on the battlefield, and the other, Shiva and Parvati on the move, seated on the Nandi bull, are clearly suggestive of the fact that other texts were included in the anthology.

The paintings are informed by a very different feeling from that which belongs to the usual, even though high quality, paintings in prayer texts. The Kashmiri elements in them are very strong, the colouring, articulation of figures, compositional arrangements, all strongly suggestive of that. Large flat areas of colour in the background, moss-green, orange, red, yellow dominate; the

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drawing is summary although not as casual as in some other Kashmiri work; elements of architecture are brought in without necessarily being 'explained', dome-like canopies of marble outer walls being introduced in symmetrical fashion at either end of the painting; the treatment of the hands in general is as unconvincing as elsewhere; there is a certain patchiness in the manner of applying some colours in the background, especially sage green. Some areas appear as if left uncoloured but hint at being lightly smudged mountains.

However, there are very strong and distinctive conventions that the painter of this series 'establishes', some of them rarely seen elsewhere, Thus, every single painting has, at the top, a narrow horizontal band marking the sky. This in itself is not unusual: it is the treatment that is. The sky consists of squiggly, spiky cypress-like forms in white, placed next to each other in a dense sequence, the points of alternating triangular arcs directed upwards and of others directed downwards. The effect is of teeth-like forms piercing the dark blue of the sky at the top. This emphatic conventionalization of the sky and clouds is scarcely seen in other Kashmiri works. In the treatment of the planes and the background, angular rather than the usual roughly rounded or curved are seen; 'behind' some of them dark-coloured spiky forms, painted very small, are introduced, evidently suggestive of tree lines, slightly fuller forms alternating with cypress-like spikes. It is not behind one plane that these appear within the same painting: sometimes two different planes are topped by the same motif of trees. A peculiar effect results from this usage, some kind of depth coming into the picture even though the backgrounds remain resolutely flat. These 'trees' are quite different from the other trees that are made much fuller and are in fact quite well painted, dense grounds made up of concentrically organised leaves in moss-green resting lightly upon trunks that fork out into three branches at the top. In the iconic renderings that are seen here again, the painter departs from the usual treament by covering a large area of the painting with an emphatic design of a carpet filling the whole width of the page and seen as if from above.

There is considerable feeling in the paintings, and the artist seems to work with accurate iconographic details. Thus, when the dark form of the goddess is shown by him, her having triumphed over the demonic hordes, the painter achieves a monumental design. Clearly differently coloured than in other leaves where she is fair coloured, here she is bluish in complexion and wears a finely patterned yellow *dhoti,* suddenly suggestive of the colour combination, blue and yellow, associated with Vishnu. She is seen six-armed, four of the hands spread out around her, holding a lotus, a *trishul,* a skull and what may be a *gada:* two hands are placed against the chest in a gesture that suggests a dance *hasta.* It is then that one realises that she is in fact dancing a slow cadenced dance, weight resting on one leg and the other leg raised and bent, the foot brought towards the middle and pointing downwards. She is clearly not seated, nor is she shown in meditation with one leg resting in the lap. The artist is suggesting the triumphal dance after her having vanquished the demonic forces. Two demons, now dead, lie close to her feet, horned figures with eyes closed to denote their no longer being alive. It is a finely achieved design, different from that which one sees in other iconic or narrative style images of the Goddess. One notices how subtly in the rendering of the *Ardhanariswara* form, the artist joins the two parts of the body, varies the attributes, even fuses the forms of the Nandi bull and the Goddess's tiger who occupy the floor to turn into a seat upon which the usual full-blown lotus is placed from the pericarp of which the form of the deity seems firmly to emerge. There is a certain daintiness in the manner in which even the left and the right half of the lotus are differently coloured, the dividing line in the centre then carrying on to the lower garment which is coloured mauve on the right proper and red on the left. One notices other details that seem almost to be personal to the artist of this series. The *choli*-blouse worn by the Goddess is truly short but, under it, there is a clear demarcation of breasts, something that one

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does not often seen in Kashmiri work. Some of the male figures—as Bhairava-like devotees, and even the male-half of the *Ardhanariswara*-figure—curiously wear *choli*-like upper garments, sometimes made of tiger skin. Devotee figures, modelled upon local pandits, wear *kantopa* caps, but in this case they end in a point rather than flatly following the contour of the head, as is common. The marks on the forehead, interestingly, look like vertically placed Vaishnava *tilaks* in red regardless of the context in which a devotee is seen worshipping a deity. When king Suratha and the vaishya Samadhi are shown having *darshana* of the Goddess one sees them in long *jamas* and turbans with small projecting *kulahs* of the kind that one sees in Pahari painting, but there is little else to suggest that Pahari work supplied any inspiration to the painter of this uncommon group of works.

M.3. THE *DIWAN* OF HAFIZ:
Coll: Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay
Acc. No. 22.3227

260 folios 19 cm x 12 cms; light brown, glazed paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* characters in double columns, separated by a narrow floral panel in gold, 11 lines to a page, within panels surrounded on three sides by a border of floral ornamentation in gold on each folio, gold and blue rules; paintings, within text panels with text above and below and, like other folios with text, surrounded by floral decorations in gold on three sides; text sections and different compositions separated by narrow horizontal panels with floral gold work, throughout the manuscript; double page illumination at the beginning, with elaborate arabesques in gold, lapis blue and red, with small text panels; papier-mache covers with ornamental floral designs; colophon dated A.H. 1198/AD 1783 with no name of scribe or patron.

This copy of the *Diwan* of Khwaja Shamsu-ddin Hafiz is evidently among countless other copies of this celebrated work that were written and painted in Kashmir. The interest that belongs to this copy lies in its colophon which dates it to AH 1198/AD. 1783—the completion date is given as the twelfth of the month of Muharram—which helps to place copies of the *Diwan* with this kind of calligraphy and illustrations to the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Another copy of the *Diwan* of Hafiz, also in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. (Acc. No. 22.3224) is very close in conception and style to the present *Diwan*, and even though dated, it bears two seals of AH 1286/AD 1869, with the name of Pandit Shyam Narayan engraved upon them in *nastaliq* characters. These are owner's seals, but if they were placed in the manuscript, close to the date of its composition, one can see the style and the iconography of Hafiz manuscripts in Kashmir remaining virtually unchanged for close to a hundred years. The *Diwan*-i Hafiz in a private collection in Switzerland (see M. 4, *infra*) is quite close, once again, to this copy of the *Diwan*, and belongs also perhaps to the late eighteenth century. Since none of these three copies bears signs of being freshly conceived in terms of compositions or iconographies, it is not unlikely that copies of the *Diwan*, which one knows to have been a greatly popular work in Kashmir and Afghanistan, were being calligraphed and illustrated in Kashmir long before this late eighteenth century copy in the Prince of Wales Museum.

The work bears a sumptuous, precious look, with very neat calligraphy and profuse ornamentation. The opening double-page with illumination apart, each folio of this copy has gold floral borders; then there are ornamental panels placed horizontally across the pages to mark the beginnings of different *ghazals* or sections etc. The narrow, small text panels surrounded by large areas of illumination in arabesques at the beginning of the work are designed to link it

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with the great manuscripts of poetic texts in the Persian traditions.

In the paintings, Persia appears as a distant source of inspiration, this work being distinctly Kashmiri. There are the all too familiar elements in the composition and in the rendering of details in these, and the matter is placed through them beyond reasonable doubt. The settings of the scenes, the architectural backgrounds, the terraces and chambers with attached projected awings the dresses worn by men and women, principal characters and minor figures alike; the physical types used by the painter; the conventions for trees, sky, water etc., are almost exactly the same as one sees in other illustrated works from Kashmir that treat of other great poetic compositions like those of Rumi, Nizami and Sadi. The poet himself appears here as a venerable, grey-beared figure, dressed in a long *qaba* over which a *chogha* is worn, a heavy turban, and at places, long boots. In general appearance, except for the beard which is sometimes black, the Hafiz of these pages is very close to what he is visulized as in so many other illustrations of his works. The women as seen in these paintings wear a familiar bold look. One sees them bejewelled, dressed in *pairahans* with deep slits at the neck, *pyjamas*, skull-caps and veils, as elsewhere. Prominently seen on their faces is a lock of thick hair that comes down the temples and curls in a prominent hook close to the ear.

The colouring has the distinctive Kashmiri air, with profuse use of red, orange, purple, blue and yellow. The backgrounds tend to vary somewhat and one sees a muddy green or a pale brown marking the landscape in some folios.

The themes of the illustrations are, as commonly seen, taken from some key words in the verses that appears on the same page as the painting. Evidently, compositions do not illustrate a whole *ghazal* or *rubai* etc., the painter simply taking off and producing an image that concretises some word or phrase in Hafiz's couplets. The figures of Yusuf, Khusraw, Shirin, Farhad, Laila and Majnun, thus, are brought in. Through them, not only is a connection established with a verse: an emotional association is also created in the reader's mind. One notices that there are stock images that belong to the painter's repertoire and these are often fitted into situations without having been first carefully conceived, or thought of afresh. Sometimes unrelated images appear on the same page because they are 'incited' by different references in the verses. On one folio, thus, we see at the top, the familiar-figures of Laila and Majnun and, nearly in continuation of these in a landscape, the figures of Yusuf and his father. There is no connection between them except that provided by Hafiz's verses which mention these figures in successive couplets scripted on the same page.

The paintings have the aspect of clarity, the figures being bold and generally isolated from others. The drawing is not especially fluent, and the figures are a little short. But this may not necessarily be due to the painter alone. He may simply have been copying or adapting from other manuscripts that he knew well from his own environment.

M. 4. *THE DIWAN OF HAFIZ;*
Private collection, Kilchberg (Switzerland)

Folios 296; 21 cm x 13 cm; light beige glazed paper; written in *nastaliq* script, in double columns, 11 lines to a page; text within panels with gold, blue and red rules along margins; 43 paintings, all contained within text panels, with text above and below, averaging, in size 9 cm x 7.3 cms; one *sarlaub* in blue, gold and green colours, opening double page with text in 'cloud patterns' in fine gold; delicately painted and lacquered papier-mache covers with intricate floral patterns both outside and inside; spine bound in light brown vellum; no colophon or date.

This copy of the celebrated complete works of Khwaja Shams-ud-din Hafiz of

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Shiraz (c. 1325-1389 A.D.) does not contain the usual introduction by his great friend and admirer, Gulandam, but has, towards the end, several verses recording the dates of death of many of the contemporaries of Hafiz and Hafiz himself, in chronograms, obviously not all composed by Hafiz himself. Among these figures occur the names of the patron of the poet, Shah Shuja, Khwaja Najam-al-din Adil, Khwaja Qiwam-al din, Sultan Akbar Sheikh Abu-al Ishaq, among others; persons that were in the select circle around the great poet. The text appears to be complete and includes, apart from the large body of *ghazals*, miscellaneous compositions like the *mukhammasat, qasaid* or panygerics, *rubaiyat* or quatrains, and *qitaat* or fragments. The illustrations in the volume, however, accompany the text only till the end of the *ghazals* section.

The text is competently scripted although the *nastaliq* is not of the highest order. The volume, judging from its size and the number of illustrations in it, was meant to be a sumptuous, pocket *diwan*, evidently of the kind that men of taste and learning took with them to garden parties that the literate are recorded as having done in the Persian-knowing world. The scenes in the paintings are all identified through short captions that are written above the text panels on the margins, and read like *shabih-i Khawaja Hafiz wa saqi wa mutrib* [picture of Khwaja Hafiz, the wine server and the music player], or *shabih-i Khwaja wa jawab wa sawal ba mashuq*—[picture of the Khwaja and his questions and answers with the beloved]. This follows a pattern seen commonly in illustrated Kashmiri manuscripts where the captions are provided, identifying carefully each scene or episode, this also possibly suggests that, at an initial stage, only the text was written and spaces for paintings were left blank with captions on margins to direct the painter for putting in the exact scene or illustration relevant to that space.

The text not being narrative in character, the illustrations frequently take some image or allusion from a couplet on the page and visualize a stock situation, like lover and beloved seated together, a garden party, the scene inside a drinking place; the *darbar* of a potentate, the poet waiting for a glimpse of the beloved, and so on. Familiar figures from Persian poetry, like Khusraw, Shirin and Farhad are drawn upon for providing accessible images. Occasionally, taking off from even an obscure reference in a verse, the painter brings in images of the Prophet's ascent to heaven on Buraq, Moses in the valley of Yemen, Solomon in his splendid court, Alexander and the waters of immortality. But, most frequently, it is the poet himself who figures in the illustrations in the company of merry-makers, pleading his case with his beloved, spending a quiet moment watching the moon rising in the sky, conversing with his love. A clear iconography of the poet has been used in the paintings, the Khwaja shown with a heavy black beard, thin side-burns, a shaven head under his large turban, wearing a long, cloak-like *qaba* with a 'chogha' coat of knee-length, open in front. Similarly, iconographies of other characters are established, like the grey-bearded, stern looking *mohtasib*, the skull-capped drunkard, the dancing *sufi* with whirling sleeves inside which the arms and hands are completely hidden, the beloved of young years with wavy curls above the temples, the boyish attendants and beloveds, also with youthful looks and wavy curls. Undoubtedly the painter was availing himself of known models, for the *Diwan* of Hafiz was among the most frequently illustrated manuscripts in these parts.

In general, the images, the scenes envisaged are concrete and do not seem to reach for the domain of mysticism inhabited by the poetry of Hafiz. It all appears to be at a simple, material level, as if the verses illustrated were possessed only of direct, straight-forward meanings. Occasionally the painter hints at other worlds, like when the Khwaja is seen seated in the night alone, contemplating the crescent moon in the sky, or Moses is seen in front of a flaming tree set in the midst of stark, mysterious violet coloured mountains bare of all growth.

The paintings have a clearly Kashmiri look, the drawing and the colouring

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both suggestive of this. At some points, there appears to be common ground between some of these works and Qajar works, but the similarities are general, not specific. On the other hand, there is very clear evidence of the painter being familiar with his Indian, specifically even Kashmiri, environment. The dresses of the common figures, drinking companions, censors, princes, and the Khwaja himself are all modelled upon Irani costumes, or at least what the painter understood as having belonged to Iran "in earlier times" But there are also explicit references to local, Kashmiri costumes, as when some women wear recognisable *pherans* with deep slits at the neck, or decorative skull caps covered with veils draped over their heads and shoulders. In a rendering of the '*rahibs*', the painter brings in a group of Kashmiri pandits, all wearing skull caps that cover the head and the ears down to the neck. There is an awareness of other styles of painting, especially the Pahari, as reflected in the treatment of flowering trees, *nayika*-like figures standing cross-legged in gardens, two storeyed pavilions with women looking down from balconies, and the like. But the work firmly remains Kashmiri in affiliation. The exquisite papier-mache covers place the matter beyond doubt.

There is no colophon, but the work can be assigned on stylistic grounds to c. 1800 A.D. No names of scribes appear at the end but, fortunately, the name of a painter figures in one of the early illustrations on a folio as "aml-i Mahmud" (painted by Mahmud) in a tiny hand just below the tree towards the top left of the page. On one of the fly-leafs, just below eulogistic verses in praise of Hafiz and of the depth of meanings in his poetry, is an owner's seal, small and oval in shape, with the words 'Abdal Raji Muhammad Raza'. If there was a date on the seal, it is no longer discernible.

M. 5. SELECTIONS FROM THE *DIWAN* OF HAFIZ
Coll. National Museum, New Delhi.
Acc. No: 57.13 2.

Folios 256: light brown paper, with slight glaze; Persian text in *nastaliq* script; 12 lines to a page, within panels with gold, red and blue rules on the margins; 11 paintings, averaging in size—9.5 cm. x 6.5 cm, all contained within text panels with text above and below; one *sarlauh* in blue, gold and pink colours; occasional text headings with illuminations in rectangular panels; Moroccan covers of tooled leather with modallions, covers, colophon giving the date of this copy as A.H.1237/A D. 1821.

The *Diwan* is not complete, this copy ending with a *ghazal* in the *radif nun*. The basis of the selections included is not clear: the patron might have indicated his preference or had access only to a volume of the same selections himself which he got copied from the Kashmiri scribe and painter. There is a long colophon, preceded by two lines of verse recording the date of the death of Hafiz in the year A.H. 791/A.D. 1389. when this 'equal of Sadi, Muhammad Hafiz, departed from this worldly inn for the domains of Heaven.'.The colophon records the completion of this book 'in the hand of the lowly mendicant, Muhammad Munawwar, made at the behest of the kindly Lala Sahib, dear to the righteous, beloved of God, Lala Rattan Chand, may he live long and may his Glory remain for ever, on the ninth of the month of Zil-Hajja, on the glorious day of *Id-ul Zuha*, at noon time, in the year of Hijra 1237', A.D. 1821.

The name of the place where this commission for Lala Rattan Chand was executed is not mentioned, but the inclusion of the scribe's name in the colophon is fortunate. If a small group of scribes worked on the manuscript, there is reason to assume that Muhammad Munawwar must have been its senior most member. The painter of the miniatures in the copy is not identified, but it is unlikely that Muhammad Munawwar was also the painter, considering that the term used to signify his work is *dastekhat* which, in all likelihood, only applies to

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the scripting of the text. The patron, Lala Rattan Chand, clearly a Hindu with a taste for Persian learning, is not identified further. It is easy to envisage, however, his belonging to a moneyed, cultivated family, possibly residing in a town in Northern India.

The paintings follow the established iconography of Hafiz illustrations, the scenes suggested and picked up from references and allusions to figures and situations that occur in the *ghazals*. While the poet, consistently rendered in this manuscript as a grey-bearded old man, wearing a turban with a small *kulah*, dressed in a *qaba* with an open fronted *chogha* over it, and is seen seated with an elegantly dressed 'beloved' or *saqi* offering a cup of wine to him, there are other characters that figure in the paintings. Thus, Khusraw and Shirin and Farhad appear in one illustration; the prophet Yusuf, Suleiman, the kings of old, Jam and Kam are seen in other illustrations; the poet provides each time a reference to them in a couplet which the painter quickly picks up. It would seem as if the painter of these illustrations was inclined to draw freely upon images that would normally occur in *Shahnama* illustrations: perhaps he was well used to producing copies of that celebrated text. Thus, when the poet refers to the *chah-i-sabr*, 'the well of patience', he brings in a *Shahnama* illustration of Rustam rescuing Bizhan from the dungeon in which he had been thrown. There is some relationship between the well that served as a confining place for Bizhan, and the 'well of patience' to which Hafiz refers, but the point seems to be considerably stretched. Interestingly, on the margin of this leaf, written along the side in red ink, is a long caption which clearly identifies this scene of the freeing of Bizhan by Rustam, Bizhan is, however, erroneously mentioned as 'Bahman', an inexplicable mistake. In another illustration where the painter takes off from the mention of Sikandar and Dara by the poet, he renders a battle-field with a fallen warrior resting his head in the lap of the grieving victor: an image that recalls more the episode of Rustam's killing of Sohrab in the *Shahnamah* rather than of Sikandar and Dara.

The paintings aim at a certain richness of impression, much attention having been devoted to decorative elements like the carpets, the designs on marble walls, the fountains in the courtyard, the low flights of steps, the hexagonal thrones and the like. The settings very often are marble terraces with double-storeyed pavilions at the back, canopies stretched out and projecting from them. But the drawing of figures is very summary, the movements, like that of Farhad chipping away at rocks in the background, being quite awkward. The faces are seen mostly in three-quarters, except those of relatively unimportant characters like attendants, and companions, which are in profile. The faces are devoid of all modelling and the eyes tend to be slightly large. Interestingly, the same bodily and facial type, a man with a flowing grey beard, is pressed into service for different types of figures, ranging from the poet himself to Zuleikha's and Yusuf's fathers.

The colouring is rich, familiar oranges, yellows, blues and greens being much used. There is heavy accenting in gold in costumes and ornamental designs. The Kashmiri women's dress, the *pairahan*, is repeatedly seen; in one case, the slit at the neck is long enough to reach down to the navel. Women wear skull caps and cover their heads with veils, while men are dressed in the usual 'Irani' costumes: turbans, long coats, waistcoats, and tall leather boots. The occasional flash of inventiveness, characteristic of so much Kashmiri work, appears. As, for example, in the rendering of Suleiman's court where the feathered world which is part of the domains over which he wields power, is represented by a narrow oblong panel that completely covers the sky densely packed with interlocking forms of birds in white and light blue, leaving no space for the horizon or sky.

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6. THE *KHAMSA* OF NIZAMI
Coll: National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 51: 136

Folios 77: 15.8 cm x 9.5 cm light brown slightly glazed paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* script in double columns separated by a narrow floral panel vertically in the pages, 13 lines to a page; gold and black rules around text and another thin rule at a distance on the margin; four paintings, averaging 11 cm x 5.8 cm in size contained within the text panels with text above and below; one *sarlauh* in azurite blue, purple, green and gold colours; modern covers; no colophon or date.

The five celebrated works of Abu Muhammad Ilyas, Nizam-al-Din popularly known as Nizami, (1140-1203) the great master of romantic *masnavis*, grouped under the collective title, the *Khamsa* 'quintet', also known as the *Panj Ganj* or 'Five Treasures', were among the most popular works of Persian literature. This is one of the vast number of copies of the text that must have been produced by Kashmiri scribes and painters. Unfortunately, however, it contains no information on the name of the scribe or painter or patron; nor is there any mention of place or date. The copy can, however be immediately linked, in respect of the style of its paintings, to the *Diwan* of Hafiz scripted by Muhammad Munawwar for Lala Rattan Chand in A.H. 1237/1821 A.D. (see M. 5 above). The paintings are evidently in the same hand as that seen in the copy of the Hafiz. The same facial types, the same strong preference for three-quarter faces, the same architectural settings are to be seen; details such as the low flight of steps leading to a terrace, the ornamentation of the carpets, the contours of the canopy projecting from a balcony, are almost identical.

In the landscapes, one sees the painter bringing in, with marked freedom, rising billowing rocks in the distance, coloured purple or green in a sequence for establishing different planes and a sense of 'distance'. The tree form in one of the paintings in which a ruler points to two birds perched in the tree to a noble, is very distinctive, being contained within firm outlines. The ruler's horse, distinguished in its colour from that of the noble, is marked by yak's tail saddlery much as the horse of Shirin in the Hafiz illustration does. There is much colour in the leaves, oranges, yellows, green and purples dominating. There is also obvious attempt at embellishment through a profusion of design in architecture, carpets, costumes. But the figures tend to be rather static, and wherever movement is brought in, as in the painting of an archer on horseback aiming his arrow at a fleeing deer, there is little conviction in the rendering.

The remarkably small number of illustrations in a text as voluminous and as amenable to dramatic illustration as the *Khamsa* comes as a surprise. Whether this had something to do with the expenses involved can only remain a guess. In contrast the writing is of fair quality and each folio has a narrow, vertically placed floral border with lotuses and meanders that gives to the copy an air of preciousness. The decoration of this narrow panel is seen in many other manuscript, and clearly draws upon a motif that was common to books and designs on papier-mache objects. The *sarlauh*, again, is elaborate and delicately executed, sharing in its colouring and its arabesque and floral pattern the designs one sees in papier-mache work. It stands out somewhat from the routine *sarlaubs*, in the prominent use of purple in it. In the margins around the text there is occasional but rather sparse annotation consisting mostly of the meanings of the more difficult words or phrases used by Nizami in his work. Thus, Nizami's *haft khat* is explained as *haft iqlim;* in the same couplet *char hadd* is paraphrased as *char anasir.* This annotation, however, is in a different hand than the one in which the text is scribed. Clearly the copy was put to good use, and its owner meant to take from the text its full meaning.

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M. 7. THE *KULLIYAT* OF SADI
Coll: National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. L 53.2/5

Folios 369; 28 cm x 5.7 cm; text panel 17 cm x 8 cm light brown, glazed paper; Persian in *nastaliq* script with text distributed over the pages in different shaped panels, the centre being occupied by straight vertical panels in double columns separated by a narrow, vertical floral panel; on the margins above, below and the side also text written in diagonal arrangement, interspersed with illuminated panels triangular in shape or narrow and straight, with occasional formulas or captions written inside them; gold, blue and red rules along the margins; 24 paintings, all placed within vertical text panels with text above and below, averaging in size 16 cm x 7.5 cm; elaborate elongated *sarlauh* in lapis-blue and gold, very intricate and 'Persian' in look; painted and lacquered papier-mache covers elaborately decorated with floral designs, bold in the central panel and relatively small and intricate along the margins; the words 'aml-i Aziz Mughal' [the work of Aziz Mughal] in tiny characters appear on both covers on the outside; two colophons; the sectional colophon of the Bustan giving the name of the scribe and the patron is dated A.H. 1244/AD 1828, the final colophon gives the dated A.H. 1246 A.D. 1830 on the margin of the last folio a seal and annotation of a late owner, Sardar Nihal Singh Ahluwalia.

The manuscript aims at great sumptuousness. The volume is considerable, this being a copy of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi, his complete works, including the *Gulistan*, and yet every single folio is richly ornamented, the use of gold and lapis seen in profusion. Each page has a central text panel, the text 'spilling' on to the broad margins, being scripted there in diagonal lines that take different directions. Triangular illuminated panels decorate the top and bottom inside corners of each page and the middle of the vertical outer edge. On some of the pages narrow rectangular panels, also illuminated in gold and lapis are scattered over the page, often serving as backgrounds for short descriptive *unwans*. The manuscript must obviously have taken a long time to complete, if the space of time between the two colophons in the manuscript offers an indication: the sectional colophon in the middle of the manuscript gives the date as A.H. 1244/1828 A.D. and the final colophon's date as A.H. 1246/1830 A.D. The patrons mentioned in both the colophons are also different although they may well be related to each other. In the intervening time one of them may in fact have died.

The first sectional colophon of the *Bustan* mentions Aqa Muhammad Ismail as the patron; he is designated as a 'Malik-ul-Tajjar' [the prince of traders], apart from being distinguished by many flattering titles by the scribe. The scribe identifies himself as 'this lowly mendicant, Nizam-al Din' The final colophon goes into a long description of the meaningfulness of the works of Shaikh Sadi and states that this copy was prepared at the asking of—several titles praising the generosity, the status and the qualities precede the name—'Aqa Muhammad Kazim son of the late [lit. 'residing in paradise'] Haji Muhammad Baqir, the trader of Isphahan'. The date is the sixteenth of Shaban, A.H. 1246/A.D. 1830. The scribe refers to himself simply as 'Nizam' but is undoubtedly the same person who wrote the sectional colophon of the *Bustan*, Nizam-al Din.

There is no mention of Kashmir, or of the place where the copy was completed. The trader patrons seem to have belonged to Ispahan but the script of the paintings is distinctly Kashmiri: the only conclusion one can arrive at is that the traders, Aqa Ismail and Aqa Muhammad Kazim, must have been engaged in trade with Kashmir. One can in fact even envisage that one of them commissioned a Kashmiri scribe to copy the manuscript, the possession of which

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was taken upon its completion at least two years after the work was started.

There is information also on the designer who may also have been the book binder of the fine papier-mache covers.It is not usual to come upon information of this kind. There is a suggestion here of an awareness on the part of the scribe and the decorator of the value of the copy.

This suggestion is strengthened further by an unusual note giving information on the person who came to acquire the manuscript later. On the margin of the last folio a circular seal with the words 'Sri Akal Sahai, Sardar Nihal Singh Bahadur', engraved in Persian in the centre, and more or less the same words in Gurmukhi and Devanagari, in a circle around the central text. A handwritten note placed close to the seal, also in Persian, refers to this copy of the works of Shaikh Sadi as belonging to the library of the exalted Sardar Nihal Singh Ahluwalia, having been purchased by him and marked by his personal seal. The price paid is not mentioned nor is a date legible. Sardar Nihal Singh, judging from his clan name Ahluwalia, may well have belonged to the royal house of Kapurthala which afforded serious patronage to art and literature in the Punjab. The quality of the twenty-five paintings, that are spread fairly evenly over the manuscript, does not perhaps live up to the standard that one comes to expect from the attention paid to the elaborate illumination. But the work is in some ways closely related to the work in the copy of the *Diwan*-i Hafiz in the National Museum (*supra* M. 5). One sees the same facial types, the same treatment of architecture and awnings, the same interest in the layout of terraces, gardens and fountains etc., the same summary treatment of wavy clouds in an ultramarine sky. The faces are generally boldly rendered, often in three quarters profile, with relatively large eyes and the pupil touching the upper lid. There is a very slight amount of shading on the faces of men, the women's faces being in contrast completely flat.

The figures are not as short as one often sees them in Kashmiri painting, and tend generally to be a little sturdier, and better drawn. There is richness in costumes, men wearing elaborately patterned *qabas, choghas* and turbans, and the women *pairahans, odhnis,* small skull-caps. A distinguishing feature of the treatment of women's hair is a thick lock that comes down to the temple and ends up in a bang-like curl close to the lower edge of the ear. The use of jewellery is considerable, special attention being paid to pearl strings. The poet, Sadi, who appears in many of the paintings, is shown as a grey bearded, venerable figure, very much a Shaikh of Shiraz. But there are also other figures among the nobles attending upon a prince who look much like Sadi, the painter working obviously with the iconography of a grave, well turned-out man of the world. There are some very interesting compositions: when Sadi appears, in a well-known episode, inside a Hindu temple and exposes the artifice of the Brahmin priests there—manipulating an idol and thus deluding the worshippers—the Brahmins are all turned out like the usual Kashmiri pandits, with their *kantopa*-caps, sitting in different attitudes in the courtyard of the temple or offering homage to the idol. Interestingly, the 'temple' has exactly the same dome, a large one in the middle and two smaller ones flanking it on either side, that tops the palace of a prince in another illustration.

The freedom with which compositions are laid out one sees in the painting of Sadi with the Brahmins, or in another one in which a tale is being told by women seated in the outer courtyard: the subject of the day, the affection that a noble tried to force upon a maid-servant of his, is shown directly above the outer courtyard in another panel, the two panels being equally visible, and somehow connected by a door in the wall behind the women seated in the lower panel; everything has been viewed from a height and thus is in full view. In a painting where the two angels Harat and Gabriel, are rendered—the reference to them picked up from the text on the same page—they are shown with prominent wings, and are set apart from other figures and placed in a bold circle painted in a dark-grey area in the lower half of the page. As here, the paintings are woven

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around words picked up from Sadi's text, the painter often availing himself of stock images, like Rustam battling Sohrab, an emaciated Majnun in conversation with Laila, handsome Yusuf being gazed at by Zuleikha, and the like. The familiar Kashmiri colours boldly applied—the purple, mauve, violet, green, yellow, lapis blue—dominate the paintings. The usual freedom with which the painter uses flat areas of colour and establishes planes through them is in evidence. there are favourite motifs and features; a sharply angled flight of steps; fountains and water channels viewed from above, small awnings projecting from glistening white walls, linear way clouds in dark blue skies.

M.8. THE *SHAHNAMA* OF FIRDAUSI
Shortened prose version titled *Shahnama-i Shamshirkhani* or *Tawarikh-i Dilkusha*
Coll: National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 56.19/3.

Folios 224; 28 cm x 18 cm. light brown paper; text in Persian in *nastaliq* script; 16 lines to a page, written inside text panels 21 cm x 12.5 cms, within blue gold and red rules; 17 paintings averaging in size 15 cm x 11.5 cms. inside text panels with text above and below; a *sarlauh* in gold, lapis blue and purple, with an *unwan* in rectangular panel with the words *bismillah-al rahman-al rahim*; old leather covers with floral designs in colour, as if in imitation of papier-mache; no date or colophon.

The prose rendering of Firdausi's great and voluminous work in an abbreviated form, essentially picking up the narrative rather than the poetic content of the original, was completed in the reign of Shah Jahan by Mirza Tawakkul Beg who was working under the supervision of Shamshir Khan, the subedar of Ghazni. This information is contained in the prefatory words on the opening pages. However, there is no mention of the date of this copy of the text. There is no colophon either, even though on the last folio, in some verses scripted in a cartouche of diamond pattern, the conclusion of the work is mentioned. The time, *waqt-i chasht* is given without the date, name of scribe or patron being mentioned. On a fly-leaf in the beginning, a brief note written in English, in black ink, reads: 'Rai Sahib, Pundit Wazir Chand Trikha'. We thus almost have the name of the late owner of the manuscript, but again no date. The title "Rai Sahib" and the use of English help place the copy in the British period, possibly after 1846, the date of the founding of the Kashmir kingdom under Maharaja Gulab Singh, or after 1849 when the Panjab was annexed to the British Empire.

The paintings in the manuscript partake of the same quality that belongs to so many *Shahnamas* from Kashmir, this being among the most commonly illustrated Persian works, and Kashmiri scribes and painters being all too familiar with it. So frequently were copies of the work commissioned that one could almost predict what episodes would be picked for illustration. There is a ring of familiarity here : Rustam overpowering the white Div in his cave; Rustam's horse, Rakhsh, attacking and killing a tiger; the battle between Rustam and Sohrab; the murder of Siyavush; and the like. The compositions are familiar again, but it is of interest to 'read' them for gaining insights into the painter's mind. In the scene, thus, of Rustam overpowering his son Sohrab, the two adversaries are placed in the middle of the page against a patch of rough green. Lower down, in the foreground, the respective horses of the two warriors stand facing each other, Rustam's Rakhsh, painted pink, at the right, and Sohrab's cinnamon brown steed at the left. From other paintings in the same manuscript one knows that Rakhsh is painted with a pink coat; even if that were not so, one can make a fair guess, that on this side at the right, it is Rustam and his forces that are rendered. This,

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because behind the rising orange coloured hill at the back, just below the ultramarine blue sky, the 'forces' of the adverseries are seen standing, facing each other: two men at the right, partially visible behind the hill, and one lone warrior, similarly rendered at left; both parties holding aloft pennants that flutter in the wind in opposite directions: almost certainly, the two men shown at right, on Rustam's side, are the painter's way of establishing which side is winning, there being thus more 'weight' in the right half of the painted page.

Rustam's pink-coated steed, Rakhsh, appears repeatedly in other illustrations outside the cave of the white Div, or when, from its back, Rustam lassoes the Khaqan of China seated on elephant back. In the latter painting which is situated in nearly the same abstract landscape with uneven registers in flat colours, the triumph of Rustam is hinted at again through two warriors holding a pennant aloft behind the hill in the 'distance', while no warrior shows up on the opposite side where the Khaqan of China is. The colours that the painter repeatedly uses, orange, moss-green and purple for establishing different planes are not consistently used in all backgrounds. Thus, in the painting in which Rustam subdues the white Div, different colours get mixed and rocks are seen rising, billowing, in a colourful arrangement indicating a mountain in which is placed a rough circular area with a dark grey ground, evidently the inside of the cave in which all the action takes place.

The colours are rather roughly applied, an uneven, smudgy appearence belonging to the flat areas suggestive of different planes. The sky is painted a consistent ultramarine blue with an occasional scalloped line in gold or white making an indeterminate cloud in it. It is clear that the text was written first, with spaces for paintings left initially blank for the painter to fill in. One sees this prominently in the painting of Rustam sleeping while Rakhsh kills an approaching tiger. There, towards the top, the tree in which Rustam is shown sleeping reaches up to the horizontal rule that defines the area of painting but is not complete, its crown left truncated at the top for want of room. Occasionally a small detail cuts across a border as when the tail of the Khaqan of China's elephant swishes across it at the left.

M.9. THE *SHAHNAMA* OF FIRDAUSI
Coll. Balmukand Aggarwal, New Delhi

Exact number of folios not known: 38.5 cm x 28.5 cm; light brown paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* script, in four columns, separated by double lines, within panels surrounded by margins with gold and blue rules; paintings, measuring on an average 18.5 cm x 6.5 cm; *sarlauh* and *unwan* in lapis blue, gold, and purple with floral decoration along borders; modern cloth covers; one sectional colophon giving the name of the scribe but with the year of completion now rubbed.

The text of Firdausi's work here is seemingly incomplete, for the last folio does not end the text and, contrary to expectation, there is no final colophon. The only colophon is at the end of Book One of the *Shahnama* which mentions this copy having been scripted by the humble and aged, Muhammad Akram alias Langar', The date of completion is given as the seventeenth day of the month of Rabi-us Sani, in the year A.H.. ...64 at the time of '*Chashti*' on Friday. The year seems to have been deliberately rubbed out by some dealer, but it is not unlikely that it read as A.H.1264/A.D. 1847. A date of A.H. 1164/A.D. 1750 appears to be unlikely for this work.

An owner's seal, large and bold, is placed on the top border of an early folio; it is circular and impressed in red ink. The legend is in Persian, but is not wholly decipherable. All one can read is '... Nawab Ali Bahadur urf [alias] Zulfiqar Bahadur'. There is also a date; while it is not fully legible, it could well read 1889,

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placing the owner late into the nineteenth century when years in the Gregorian calendar were being engraved on seals in Inida.

The calligraphy is competent but undistinguished. The paintings can be described as being routine and repetitive in character, the greatest impression in them being made by the vividness of the colours. There can be little doubt that the hand that made these paintings was well-practised in providing illustrations to the *Shahnama*, this being among the most frequently copied texts in Kashmir. It is of great interest to see the close connection between some of the illustrations in this copy of the *Shahnama* and some others, like those in the *Shahnama-i Shamshirkkhani* (M. 8). The conception is strikingly similiar in the rendering of many scenes even though there is variantion in detail. If one takes, for example, the scene of Rustam slaying the white Div, all elements in the composition are the same except that the image seems to be reversed, the Div's attendant being tied to the tree at right and Rakhsh standing at left in this copy, while in the *Shahama-i Shamshirkhani,* the Div tied to the tree is on the left and Rakhsh stands outside the cave at right. The scaling of the figures of Rustam and the white Div are also, correspondingly, reversed. the figures, the placing of the various elements within the composition, the elimination of all other details except the most essential ones, are exactly the same. There are, of course, differences in the treatment of details; the rocks here are differently articulated. This, in fact, is a feature one sees as having been favoured by the painter in several other leaves—; Rakhsh, even though rendered in the same pink of coat, is shown spotted here; the details of the dresses are a little better worked out; the white moisture-less clouds suspended in the sky are more palpable, and so on.

It is not only in one painting or two that one sees these strong connections between the *Shahnamas;* a pattern seems to emerge. The closeness between the two manuscripts is emphasized through other related scenes; the murder of Siyavush, the lassoing of the Khaqan of China by Rustam; the killing of a tiger by Rakhsh, Rustam's steed. When the bare head of Siyavush is seen, it is shaved and bent at the same angle in both manuscripts; when the Khanqan of China is lassoed from atop his elephant back, his body bends in the same fashion and the white elephant is decorated almost identically in the two manuscripts.

The number of illustrations in this *Shahnama* being much larger, one sees more scenes rendered, but almost certainly other copies of the *Shahnama,* with which the painter was familiar, carried the same illustrations composed in the same fashion.

The rich, flaming oranges, dark purples. moss-greens, ultramarine blues, pale yellows, and light browns stand out on each page. There is boldness in the manner in which figures are placed starkly against coloured backgrounds that are not easy to handle. Fantastic animals like the dragon and a huge, spotted wolf-like animal wounded by an archer are realised with a flair. One does not see water too often, but when it appears it does so as a flat surface rendered in a light grey with thin overpaint of white; no silver marks the surface of the water and there are no patterns in it. Details are eschewed as much as is possible and the painter is intent on making statements that leave one in no doubt about the status of figures, the setting of a scene, the outcome of a struggle. Thus, we see the evil Zuhhak seated not inside a palace, as would be expected, but out in the open, his status indicated only by his low throne placed atop a carpet and a small canopy with thin poles shown above his head. The usual conventions that mark scenes from the *Shahnama* are seen repeatedly; warriors appearing behind hillocks, banners fluttering in the sky, men on the battle-field dressed in long coats, breeches and tall boots. Very little architectural detail is seen but when arched crenellations or marble gateways appear, they seem to lead one back to late Mughal paintings from which one strain in Kashmiri painting seems clearly to have been derived.

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M. 10. *RAM GEETI KATHA*
Coll. National Museum, New Delhi.
Acc. No. 56.19/1

Folios 274; 24 cm x 16 cm; light brown, slightly glazed paper; Brajbhasha in *nastaliq* script, text with panels 16.5 cm x 10 cm, surrounded by rules in gold, red and blue. 10 lines to a page; 42 paintings, contained within text panels with text above and below; one *sarlauh* in azurite blue, gold, red and green; modern covers; colophon dated V.S. 1904/A.D. 1847.

The text of this richly illustrated manuscript is not one that is commonly come upon from Kashmir. In fact this may be the *only* known manuscript of the *Ram Geeti Katha*, which appears to be a version in Brajbhasa verse of an older Sanskrit work, the *Hanuman Natak*. The colophon mentions the relationship between the *Ram Geeti Katha* and the *Hanuman Natak*, but the full import of the facts stated there is not clear for want of legibility of a few key words.

The text is in Brajbhasha verse but the script in which it is written is *nastaliq*. This is an unusual. if not unknown, combination, raising difficulties in the matter of reading unless one is thoroughly familiar with the text. The opening words of invocation directly below the *sarlauh* read '*Om Sat Gur Prasad*' [Om! with the grace of the Sat Guru], a slight variant of the formula that commonly occurs at the beginning of Sikh sacred texts. The contents of the work relate to the story of Rama, with special emphasis on the role of Hanuman; there is thus no direct 'Sikh' content in the work. But the invocatory formula seems to have been employed almost as a matter of routine, the scribe being perhaps used to doing this from having produced manuscripts in large numbers for Hindu and Sikh patrons in the Panjab and Kashmir. The text is in *kavitts, savaiyyas*, and the usual *dohas*. It opens, directly after the invocatory formula, with a resonant, alliterative *kavitta* in which praises of Rama are sung. The scribe of the manuscript is someone known from other Kashmiri works which have survived, Pandit Tota Ram. The colophon provides full information, and reads; "In the administrative domains of Maharaja Sahib, Maharaja Gulab Singh Jio, may his prosperity remain forever, written at the behest of Lala Sahib, the faithful and the devout, Lala Genda Mal ji, may he live long, (this work was) completed in the hand of the devout and the lowly, Pandit Tota Ram in the (Vikrami) Samvat one thousand nine hundred and four (V.S. 1904/A.D. 1847.)" The colophon is written in red ink and is leisurely spread over the lower half of the page, filling it.

No name of a painter figures in the colophon, but one would not be surprised if the work is in the hand of Pandit Tota Ram himself who may have learnt the art alike of painting and calligraphy. The feeling in the paintings is of such an order, and some of the details so accurate in terms of established Hindu iconography, that this suggestion comes across rather strongly. The paintings do indeed show a very marked sense of the appropriate and since this was not a commonly illustrated text, the painter must have had to devise illustrations as he went along, basing himself upon the meanings and the allusions in the text.

The style is clearly of the standard Kashmiri kind, familiar from so many copies of the *Shahnama* and the works of Hafiz, Sadi etc. In fact, some of the motifs seem to be taken directly from the *Shahnama*. One sees this, thus, when the great bird, Jatayu, is shown about to engage Ravana in battle as the lord of Lanka flees on his chariot with Sita, holding her as a captive from her hair. The bird here, as rendered by the painter, could easily have served in a *Shahnama* page as the simurgh, bearing the same general rooster-like appearance, with a thick neck and a splendid spread-out tail. Again, in the battle with Ravana with differently coloured, high domical rocks rising at the back, the figures of the demons and the monkeys ranged against each other as opposing armies appear just behind the rocks, holding pennants much like opposing armies are seen carrying banners

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behind hillocks in *Shahnama* battle-scenes.

The painter employs standard Kashmiri conventions in his rendering of figures, landscape, sky, and architecture etc. One sees thus familiar forms in three-quarter profile and no or little modelling; straggly Chinese clouds in a blue sky; backgrounds arbitrarily varied in colour to mark different planes; areas separated out from each other by meanders that serve for rocks or stylized horizons; architecture frontally viewed with little depth etc. The colour is again distinctively Kashmiri: rich, using strong oranges, purples, yellows, greens and ultramarine blues with a prominent use of gold. Flowering shrubs are commonly seen, somewhat reminiscent of late Mughal or Pahari work. A distinctive tree, as different from a shrub, also with full, flowering branches is seen: in the scene where Jatayu battles Ravana, and again when Ravana appears disguised as an ascetic to lure Sita away from her hut, Ravana, with his ten heads, evenly split into two groups of five each, facing away from each other, is shown with a boyish appearance, reminding one of the manner in which Kashmiri artists often render the figure of four-headed Brahma, Atop the ten heads of Ravana is a donkey-head connotive of his evil, misdirected nature. Several *rishis* appear in the paintings, most often dressed like typical Kashmiri pandits, their heads covered in *kantop*-caps covering the back of the neck and the ears fully; Hanumana who makes a frequent appearance is always shown dressed in shorts, with a prominent curving tail, and his face partly painted in a strong red.

The treatment of fire is very distinctive, strong orange-red flames rising like symmetrical spikes. It is of interest to see fire as it burns in a *havana kunda,* treated iconically, marked by the seven flames that traditionally belong to it. When Hanumana is seen flying through the air, carrying the hill with the efficacious *sanjivani* herb growing on it in profusion, the mountain seems to be afire, but this fire is carefully distinguished by the painter from the sacred seven-tongued fire that burns below with the *rishis* performing a *yajna* as Bharat prepares to bring the unfamiliar figure of Hanumana down with his arrow, taking him to be an enemy.

The freedom with which the painter devises things and situations is quite marked. The hut in which Sita is seated as she is approached by Ravana takes the simple form of a trinagular flat yellow area, no suggestion of a structure being provided by the painter. This area thus marks at once the conical hut and the magical line drawn around her by Lakshmana to protect her from inimical forces. Again, the demons who threaten and interfere with the sacred ceremonies of the *rishis* levitate in the sky against differently coloured grounds above a meander of twisted rope-like rocks below which 'the earth' is placed, separating this from the upper regions, Hieratic scaling is used, as when the figure of Sita is shown so tiny and helpless when being carried away in a chariot by Ravana. The structure of the chariots freely uses the mauve-and-purple lotus-leaf motif that spreads like some sanctified seat all over it.

There are the usual deficiencies: short figures, relatively static stances, summary drawing etc. But these paintings seem to be invested with a distinct, devout feeling which marks the text of the *Rama Geeti Katha*.

M. 11. THE *RAMACHARITAMANASA* OF TULSIDASA: IN 2 VOLS.
Coll. National Museum, New delhi
Acc. No. 86.154/1-2

Folios, vol. I, 462, vol. II 294; 25.7 cm x15 cm; size of folio 26 cm x 15 cm; text in *Brajbhasha* written in *nastaliq* script, within panels 18.5 cm x 9 cm; 11 lines to a page, with gold, blue and red rules along margins; all folios with some panel illuminated in gold, 105 paintings in vol. I, 77 paintings in vol. II, averaging in size 20 cm x 10 cm, within text and panels measuring 18.5 cm x 9.5 cm, with text above and below, and decorative floral border on three sides enclosing the whole text panel; opening double page in

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gold, purple and lapis blue, with elaborate patterning, leaving a smaller space for text than on usual folios; occasional horizontal panels containing *dohas, sorathas, chhappais,* set apart from the text with *chaupais*; modern cloth covers in red; no date or colophon.

This uncommonly rich manuscript has no indication of date, scribe, or patron in the colophon; the only information with any 'facts' comes in a late owner's note written rather roughly in the margins of the last folio of vol. II. The owner identifies himself as Barkat Ram son of Jwala Sahai Brahmin, 'alias Dhami Gosain', resident of the village Rajput, also known as Rasoolpur, in the Hafizabad Tehsil of Gujranwala Distt. This only helps to establish one kind of connection with the Punjab, for clearly the manuscript was at this place when it was in the possession of Barkat Ram; where it was written or acquired is not recorded.

The original text in *brajbhasha* is scripted here in *nastaliq* and presents some difficulties in reading to a person who is familiar only with *brajbhasha* in Devanagari script, or Persian/Urdu written in *nastaliq*. There is little doubt, however, that the text was read, for it has a considerable amount of interlinear notes in the form of explanation of some words or concepts in a long hand just below the word in question. Interestingly these 'annotations' are not in one language, and vary from simple Hindi to Persian, but are always written in the *shikasta* script. Their aim clearly is to bring words and concepts used in the original *brajbhasha* of Tulsidas, within the reach of different readers who were evidently at home in simple Hindi and in Persian. The captions of the paintings, sometimes quite long, are noted in the margins of the folios in red ink, here. The Persian used is of the standard kind. It is in the interlinear notes alone that words are explained in mixed terms. To take an example: at one place, *mana hi mana* of *brajbhasha* is translated into Persian as *dar dil-i khud,* whereas *avani* is rendered into simple Hindi as *dharti* in an interlinear note.

The *Ramacharitamansa,* or *Tulsi Ramayana* as it is popularly known, is not a text commonly illustrated in Kashmir. This copy is at the same time profusely illustrated with as many as 182 paintings spread over the two volumes of the manuscripts; there is, thus, some kind of a challenge that the painter must have seen in illustrating this lengthy text. One gets the distinct feeling that while he could fall back upon stock images or compositions in a few places, most often he decided to visualize compositions afresh. In doing this he naturally brought in elements from familiar compositions, but the arrangements are often new and at times the compositions appear completely original, the painter having no models virtually to draw upon. When an army is shown on the move, or a ruler sets forth in a chariot, with footmen seen in the distance beyond hillocks, the painter could easily have availed himself of a standard *Shahnama* or *Bhagavadgita* kind of compositon and inserted it into the *Ramayana* with a minor change of characters etc. But when Kumbhakarana is shown destroying and devouring the monkey hordes, or Hanumana is setting Lanka on fire, it seems as if the painter is thinking his compositions out for the first time. A feeling of freshness belongs to so many folios even if the conventions are familiar and the colours as such are all too well known from other illustrated Kashmiri works.

The planes are established by the painter in the usual fashion, different colours applied flat to define rising, uneven, curving areas; the sky is the usual ultramarine blue with thin clouds floating lazily stretched across the width of the page; hillocks rise at the back and from behind them figures of warriors and companion are seen, in some cases those of the monkey warriors of Rama's army; small groups of persons appear seated inside floating chambers to suggest different households with normal activity going on inside them; trees with leafy foliage alternate with flowering, spiky bushes placed starkly against dark grounds; and so on. But at places the compositions are startling and greatly innovative. In the folio where Ahiravana suddenly shows up, for instance, while

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Rama and Lakshmana are asleep. Hanumana facing Ahiravana suddenly stretches out his tail for it to form some kind of a protective, fortifying barrier around a whole row of his monkey companions quietly asleep in the night. A wonderful pattern is thus achieved by the painter, the element of surprise, and the quick improvisation to meet that surprise, being brought in with conviction and lively visual impact. In the scene of Rama's building the bridge across the sea towards Lanka the wavy pattern of the bridge, the brilliance of the colours used for the rocks constituting it, and the springhtliness with which assisting figures are scattered over the page, fill the folio with remarkable verve. One sees evidence of this innovativeness on the painter's part in folio after folio; the enormous figure of Jatayu being slashed by Ravana's sword as he flees with Sita on his chariot; the gigantic figure of Kumbhakarana—curiously reminiscent of similar figures from the Khan-i-Khanan's *Ramayana* in the Freer Gallery, in which Kashmiri painters were involved—taking on the army of monkeys, the remembered episode of Shiva pierced by Kama's arrow; Kalanemi at worship before a Shaligrama shrine. Statements are made with marked visual clarity, the painter evidently having fully internalized the context and the import of the words of Tulsidas before visualizing the episodes.

One notices some interesting details that the painter may have thought out and brought in as he 'entered' the text. The demons in Lanka are, for example, all differently coloured and the eyes in their faces are placed at various unlikely angles, combining profiles and three quarter faces. The women's dresses seem to be a conscious variation of the usual Kashmiri *pherans* that one sees in the illustration of *Diwan*-i-Hafiz or the *Shahnama* of Firdausi: some of the shirts worn are long with deep slits at the sides reaching upto the waist. In his treatment of mountains, the painter puts together the usual bare dome-shaped rocks but proceeds to colour them not individually but by thinly spreading over them different colours like purple, mauve, red and pale green as if awash with these colours. But, at some places, the rocky mountains are textured as if they were hard stones with patterns of lotus petals roughly distributed over them. The men and women in these painted folios wear their usual, shadowless aspect; the figures are ordinarily in true profile; Rama is mauve-blue in complexion, but Bharata is not; the ten-heads of Ravana spread out in two groups, five each on either side facing in different directions and the whole group topped by a donkey-head. Whenever 'devotees' or 'worshippers' are to be shown, the usual figures of Kashmiri pandits with their *kantopa*-caps and scarves draped across their bare chests are brought in.

There is much visual excitement that the paintings in this unusual manuscript afford, and one is left wondering as to what the Kashmiri painters might have been able to offer in terms of fresh compositions if a wider range of texts had been illustrated by them. The work in this manuscript and the stylistically closely related manuscript of the *Ram Geeti Katha* (M. 10, above) is of such order as to lead one's thought in this direction.

M. 12. MEDITATIONAL TEXT IN SCROLL FORM
Coll: Staatliches Museum fur Volkerkunde, Munich
Acc. No. 6397 to 6404

Text in scroll form; 17 cm in width; light brown glazed paper; text contained within decorative floral margins running along the entire length of the scroll, red rules along the margin leaving narrow bare border on the outside; paintings and floral and vegetal motifs, with narrow dividing horizontal bands with ornamentation, mixed with Sanskrit text in Devanagari characters in the entire body; dense illustration at the top, with elaborate floral work and figures and motifs contained within medallions; no date or colophon.

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Pub: Fausta Nowotny, *Eine Durch Miniaturen Erlauterte Doctrina Mystica aus Srinagar* (The Hague, 1958).

The 'mystic doctrinal' text to which the scroll is devoted is not identified precisely in the work, but it is clearly related to the system of *chakras* that are visualized within the 'subtle body' of the yogi-meditator. Twelve *chakras* or *bhramaras* and *pithas* are identified, each precisely described in respect of its location in the subtle body, and the *devta*, the *shakti*, the *rishi*, etc. associated with it. The text gives elaborate detail of meditational significance of each 'station', identifying the point upon which concentration needs to be directed. From the top, the text and the illustrations move vertically downwards, even though the scroll may have been unfurled from the bottom upward, the meditator being required to move up slowly from the lowest station to the highest, from the first to the twelfth. It is clear from the manner in which the text and the illustrations or diagrams intermingle that the painting of the scroll preceded the writing of the text. It is only thus that letters or words would be fitted into the spaces left between the intricate designs filling the page, within the form of the composite animal that accompanies the textual description of the tenth station, '*purnagiri pitha*'. Lines of different colours sometimes taking different routes connect all major images in the scroll, the three 'arteries' or *naris*—Ida, Pingala, and Susumna—possibly suggested through this device. The principal illustrations accompanying the various stations are all placed in the middle of the page and are essentially circular in form; each of these is, in turn, connected with a smaller circle, through a line, in which a meditating figure is seen seated. The suggestion obviously is that the meditator is, at this point, focusing upon and visualising the *chakra* or *bhramara* in this form.

At the very top, the visual elements predominate, different medallions and 'carved out' spaces featuring different images. The largest medallion filled with dense floral motifs at the top has the mystic syllable 'Om' within the body of which, in the characteristic Kashmiri scheme, different deities are incorporated, the syllable deriving its energy from their presence. Vishnu in the lower hook, Brahma in the horizontal bar, Shiva in the curving line at top; Ardhanarishwara in the circular, nasal dot; and Bhairava in the vertical line next to the hook. Below this medallion, in separate areas and facing each other, are the figures of Ganesha and Hanumana, the space between them occupied by a motif within a yellow coloured space of a banner implanted in a stepped structure. Lower down is another smaller medallion in which the waters are represented, filling the entire circular space, with lotuses blossoming in it. A tree form with a small figure of Krishna amidst its crown and a sage-like figure standing next to the trunk suggest the vision of Markandeya. But there is also a figure in a small boat in the waters, and a peacock at the edge. This circular medallion is surrounded by cypress and *kalgha* motifs as if in imitation of a shawl pattern.

Below this is a scalloped arch from the highest point of which the text part of the scroll begins, opening with the words "*Om sri ganeshaya namah*". Then follows the description of the *Dwadasha Bhramara*, with the *devta, the shakti*, the *rishi* etc. The light emanating within the subtle body, at this point, is described by the text to be that emanating from a thousand suns. A pavilion in which the devta of the *bhramara*, Shiva, is seen seated, is placed within a shrine surrounded by text, which, at this point, in the manner of sumptuously written manuscripts, has lines in alternating colours, red, black and gold.

The illustrations in the medallions throughout the scroll bear a characteristic Kashmiri aspect, figuration, illumination, floral decoration, all belonging to a well established pattern. The deities, alone or with their consorts, are often seen seated in a circle made up completely of lotus petals seen upside down as if growing from top to bottom. When a schematic group of lotus petals around a central circle is adopted, each of the petals spreads out in different directions and

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carries a letter of the alphabet on it. There are geometric shapes and motifs that take the place of central illustrations at some points in the scroll, circles, half-moons, floating heads etc. taking over. Interspersed with these are bold cypress and *kalgha* motifs filled with floral patterns against an uncoloured ground. Towards the bottom of the scroll, landscape features come in adding to the complex, highly abstract nature of the visual elements constituting the scroll.

The colouring in general has a strong Kashmiri look, pinks, purples, mauves, yellows and whites predominating. However, the iconography with its strict demands in a precise meditational text dictates the choice of colours for specific motifs or figures. Smoke coloured, yellow-ochre coloured, white-coloured as some figures or patterns are meant to be, the painter strictly follows the prescriptions of the text. Where there is ornamentation, the scroll bears sometimes the appearance of a richly coloured and patterned papier-mache surface.

The scroll was perhaps among the earliest Kashmiri works to enter a Western museum. It may be dated to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In its present form, the original scroll has been split into parts evidently for the sake of convenience of preservation or display in the museum.

M. 13. THE *BHAGAVADGITA*
Coll. Kurukshetra University Library, Kurukshetra
Acc. No. 52599

Folios 171; 10.5 cm x 18 cm; Sanskrit text in *devanagari* characters, within panels measuring 6.5 cm x13 cm, with gold and black rules along margins; 5 lines to a page; 19 paintings, measuring in size 8.2 cm x 12.5 cm, each with a broad outer border, opening double page, and with illumination in standard Persian style, with small space for text panel containing only three lines; the following page with double floral borders framing the text; the first three paintings facing blank pages, the others with text pages facing them; modern cloth covers; no date or colophon.

The standard text of the *Bhagavadgita,* in the usual format with bold lettering, alternating lines scripted in different colours like black, red and gold, makes up this manuscript. Like most others of its kind, meant essentially for use as a ritual text in daily recitation, it contains no information on date, patron, scribe, or painter. The records of the Library mention that the work was acquired from Narada Grama in the Kaithal Tehsil of Kurukshetra district. The manuscript may well have been copied there, since there is documented information available about groups of itinerent Kashmiri scribes and painters being active in the plains of Northern India, including present day Haryana, in the nineteenth century. The manuscript can be dated to the middle of that century. The calligraphy is bold but not necessarily very accurate, some letters easily mixed up with others. The errors of scripting are, however, more apparent in the captions provided to the paintings that are interspersed in the copy with the text. These captions are not necessarily in the hand of the professional scribes and painter responsible for the copy, for the hand is smaller and different. But the errors are obvious: the words *goverdhan dharana,* are thus written as *gudh-dare*; similarly, *Kalki* is written as *Karki.*

The paintings constitute the main interest of this manuscript. As many as 19 of these are inserted, most of them not directly related to the text of the *Bhagavadgita*. While the image of *Vishwarupa* is central to the text, the ten avataras to each of which a separate painted folio is devoted, are essentially peripheral to the text even though they are Vaishnava in content, like the *Bhagavadgita.* The themes of other folios are taken from the life of Krishna, as in the *Bhagavata Purana*: there are renderings, thus, of the *Rasa-lila* of Krishna

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with *gopis,* of Krishna lifting the mount Govardhana, and the like. It is all part of the dual endeavour to lend greater visual interest to the manuscript and to provide a general Vaishnava context to the text.

The paintings are of uncommon interest for in them is clearly reflected the awareness of standard, early nineteenth century 'Kangra' painting on the painter's part. The narrow decorative borders of the paintings, alternating four-petalled flowers with a red centre with green or purple spots intervening between them, against a deep blue background, are clearly taken from late Kangra work from the hills. The compositions of some of the leaves are again distinctly influenced by Pahari work. The painting of Rama and Sita seated on the throne attended upon by Hanumana and the three brothers of Rama, or the one of Vamana *avatara* with Bali pouring water from a vessel in token of making a gift to the Brahmin dwarf, with its strong architectural setting and its grouping of figures, are very strongly Pahari in flavour. At the same time there is a clear Kashmiri aspect to the paintings as reflected in the palette, the distribution of colours on the page, the manner of establishing different planes, the articulation of figures, the lack of modelling, the highly decorative and profuse use of lotuses in mauve and purple that provide full blown seats for deities. There is much liveliness in compositions, and a distinct sense of mounting excitement in the manner in which the painter starts building the planes as background; in differently coloured, curved areas, with lines of trees, or canopies or hills breaking the bounds of the painted panel at the top; features clearly cutting across the borders. The handling of coloured planes is delicate, the artist displaying a marked sense of control. In the painting of Krishna lifting the mount Govardhana, for instance, the earth is defined by a narrow area of purple and white that horizontally stretches across the page; above it is a broad uneven band of red ground upto the level of Krishna's waist; from that, another band of muddy yellow takes over; above that on either side two dome-shaped areas of grey appear, flanking an orange-red area in the middle against which the nimbate blue-complexioned head of Krishna stands starkly; topping everything in this composition is the Govardhana hill that again stretches out horizontally across the page with scalloped edges above and below, and purple and mauve, flower-like drops making it up. In the corners are small areas of red spandrels while the top consisting of the mountain cuts across the top border and cypresses of different colours and crowns of different trees raise their heads from behind the hill.

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Acc. No. 5077
Dated 16/5/03

It is in this fashion, and with this flair for colours and shapes, that the other paintings are also made. In the scene of Vishnu as Matsya subduing the demon *Shankhachuda,* the painter seems to look back over his shoulder to a Pahari model, but treats the scene with a characteristic sense of freedom. Vishnu emerges from the mouth of a giant fish with its sweeping tail rising high into the air: his body is bent forward, two hands holding the long tresses of *Shankhachuda,* as if he were Kamsa being toppled from his throne, while he stands precariously on a giant conch shell towards the left. Within the arch made by the bending figures of Vishnu and the demon is placed a large lotus leaf upon which sit the four personified forms of the Vedas in an unusual compositional rendering. The battle is set in the midst of placid waters with a silvery surface in which lotuses are seen blossoming in profusion. The edge of the ocean is marked by a narrow band in purple and mauve, looking as if it were an embankment made of wreathed lotuses; above it extends an area of flat, deep ultramarine blue.

There is the usual set of conventions and motifs that the painter relies upon. The Vishwarupa of Vishnu-Krishna takes the familiar form of myriad heads of gods, men and animals against a white ground that seem to emerge from the mouth of Vishnu and form an enormous aureole around his head: Arjuna stands in awe and wonder facing him. The figures tend to be short, the complexions uncommonly fair, the lips marked by prominent spots of red, the women's hair distinctly curved over the temples and ending in solid curls close to the ears, the

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patterning of the costumes generally limited to circular spots in gold or silver, etc. There is an air of sophistication in these paintings, and a lively amalgam of different styles, with the Kashmiri strain clearly dominant, but the Pahari influence providing a fresh panache to renderings.

M. 14. AN ANTHOLOGY OF PRAYER TEXTS
Coll: Museum Rietberg, Zurich
ex-coll: Reinhart family, Winterthur
Acc: No. RVI 816.

Folios number unknown; 7.9 cm x 18.5 cm; Sanskrit text in Devanagari characters, within panels. 4 lines to a page, several illuminated folios marking the beginning of a new text within the anthology; many folios with narrow floral margins surrounding the text; opening lines of a new text frequently scripted in gold against a lapis blue ground; 6 paintings painted on a full page combined with illumination and text on the facing page; modern cloth covers; no date or colophon.

The manuscript takes the standard form of the kind of anthologies of prayer or ritual texts that make up pocket-sized *gutkas*. The size of the manuscript is not such in this case as easily to fit into a pocket, but it is likely to have been kept, wrapped in silk etc. at a place of prayer in the household, to be picked up and recited from regularly, perhaps daily.

An unusual inclusion, even though in a late hand, is a sheet giving details of the various texts included in the manuscript in a tabulated form, the number of leaves, paintings, illuminated leaves, *shlokas* etc. This may well have been included prior to the sale of the manuscript by some dealer to provide information to a potential customer. This manuscript of prayer texts was purchased from the dealers Ganeshi Lal in Agra by Georg Reinhart in 1927 for Rs. 400/- The texts are listed, along with the other information, as below:

1. *Ganesha stotra:* 4 folios; 1 painting; 14 shlokas
2. *Sandhyopasana:* 18 folios; 1 painting; 60 shlokas
3. *Vishnu sahasranama*; 56 folios; 1 painting; 175 shlokas
4. *Mahimna*; 25 folios; no painting; 85 shlokas
5. *Shani stotra*: 17 folios; 1 paintings; 58 shlokas
6. *Brahma stotra;* 11 folios; no painting; 35 shlokas
7. *Sapta shloki Gita;* 4 folios; no painting; 10 shlokas
8. *Chatur shloki Bhagavata:* 2 folios; no painting; 8 shlokas
9. *Bharat Savitra:* 3 folios; no painting
10. *Ekashloki Ramayana*: 1 folio; no painting
11. *Shiva Kavaca:* 21 folios; one painting
12. *Saundarya Lahiri*: 70 folios; one painting

The list mentions also decorative illuminations under the title; *bel* [lit; 'creeper'] in the case of the three texts listed at Nos.1, 11 and 12 above. It all adds up, according to the list, to 233 folios; six paintings; and six *bel* illuminated pages.

With great care lavished upon the illumination and the calligraphy, the manuscript stands out from among works of this category, for prayer texts often have innovative but not 'precious'-looking illustrations of this order. There is little doubt that this copy was put to much use, judging from the thumb-stains that appear throughout the copy, the corners from which the folios must have been held while turning being darker, and a little smudgier than the rest of the page which is not as often handled.

The illumination on these folios often goes beyond the text panels, the key words on the margins giving the abbreviated titles of the relevant text being enclosed within floral designs. The paintings, it would appear, are not all in the

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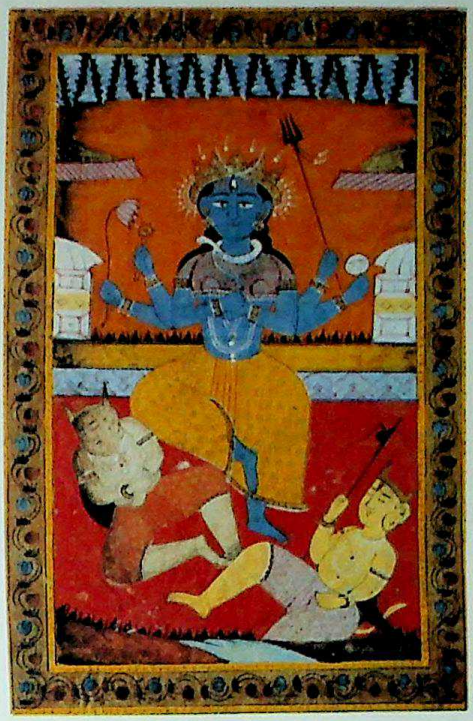
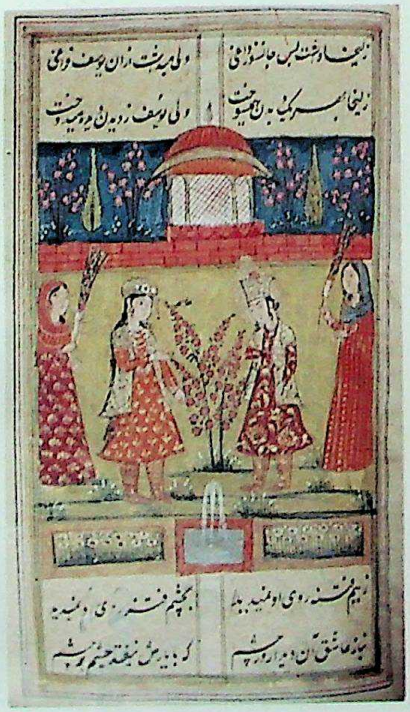
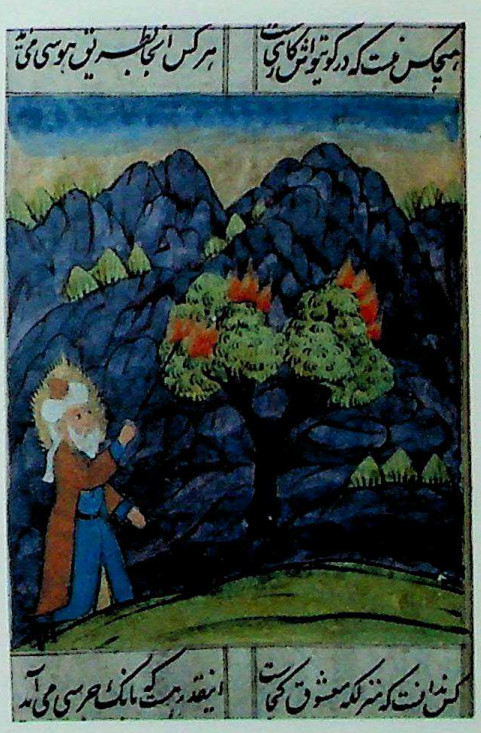
M1. Folio from an Anthology of Ritual Texts: The Cosmic Lotus.



M2. Folio from a Ms. of the *Devi Mahatmya* and other texts: The Devi triumphant over demons.



M3. Folio from a Ms. of the *Diwan* of Hafiz: Lovers in a Garden.



M4. Folio from a Ms. of the *Diwan* of Hafiz: Moses and the Burning Bush.

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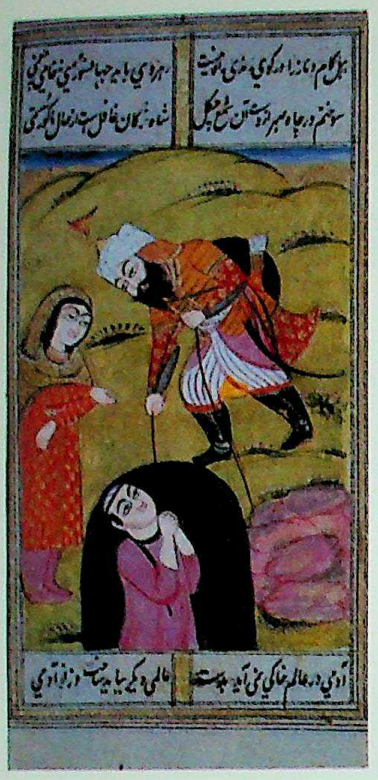
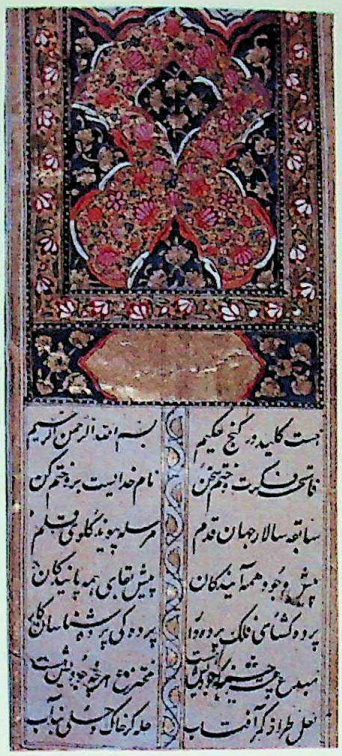
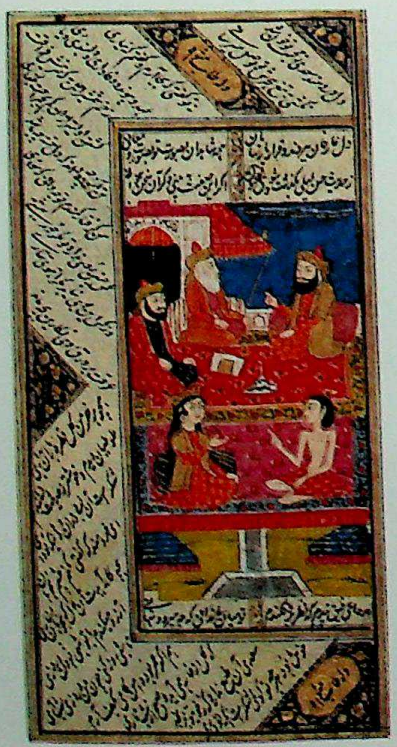


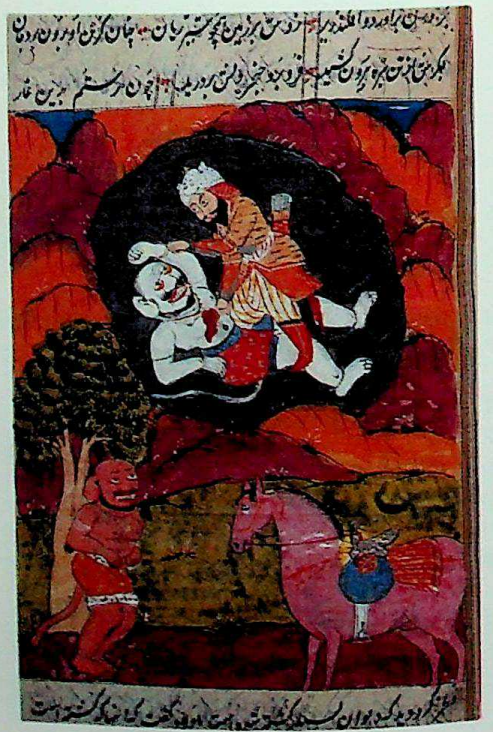
M5. Folio from a Ms. of Selections from the *Diwan* of Hafiz: Rustam rescues Bizhan.



M6. Opening illuminated folio from a Ms. of the *Khamsa* of Nizami.



M7. Folio from a Ms. of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi: The poet speaks of Laila and Majnun.



M8. Folio from a Ms. of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi: Rustam subdues the White Div.

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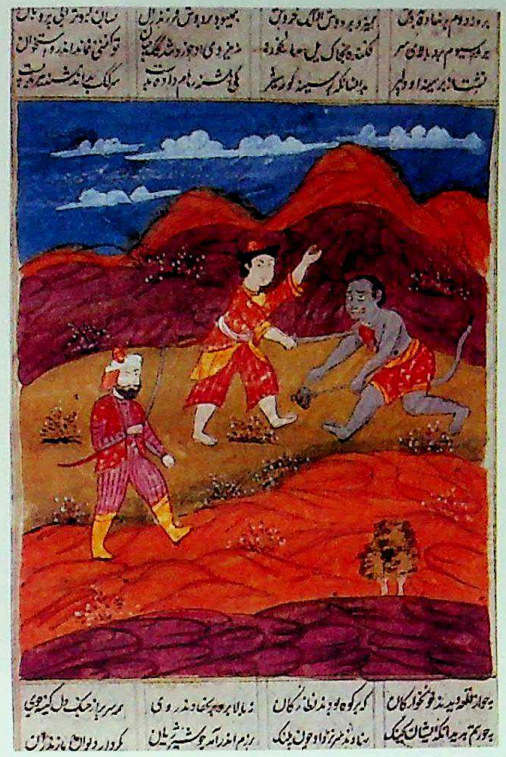

M9. Folio from a Ms. of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi: The Black Div is subddued.

M10. Folio from a Ms. of the *Ram Geeti Katha*: Jatayu challenges Ravana.

M11. Folio from a Ms. of the *Ramacharitamanasa* of Tulsidasa: Rama's army builds a bridge across the ocean.

M12. Opening part of a meditational text-scroll.

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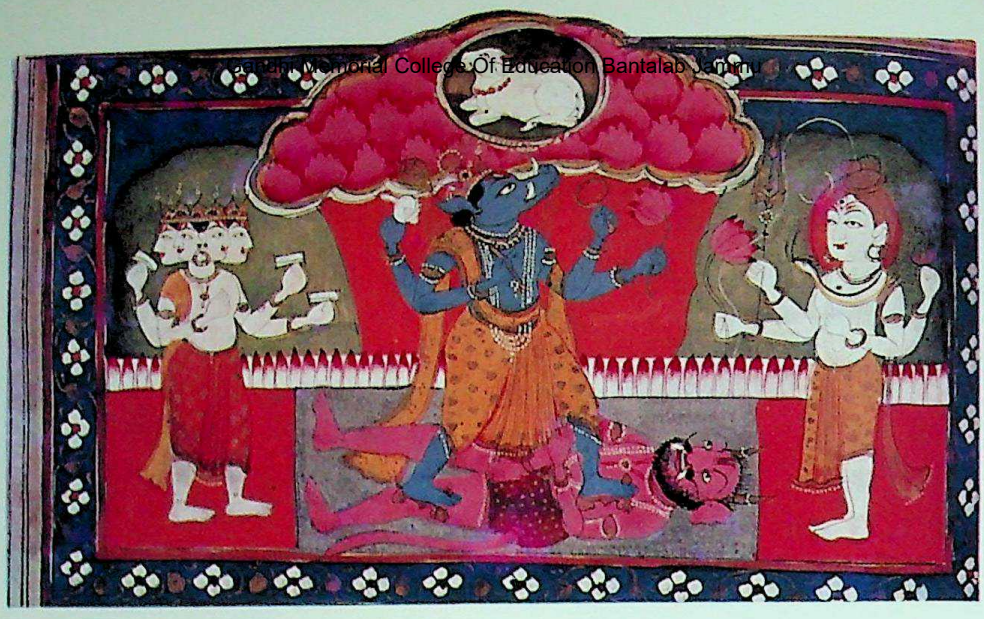

M13. Folio from a Ms. of the *Bhagavadgita*: Varaha, Vishnu's third *avatara*.

M14. Folio from an Anthology of Prayer Texts: Shiva and Parvati on mount Kailasha.

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M15. Folio from a Ms. of the *Bhagavadgita*: Arjuna paying obeisance to Krishna.

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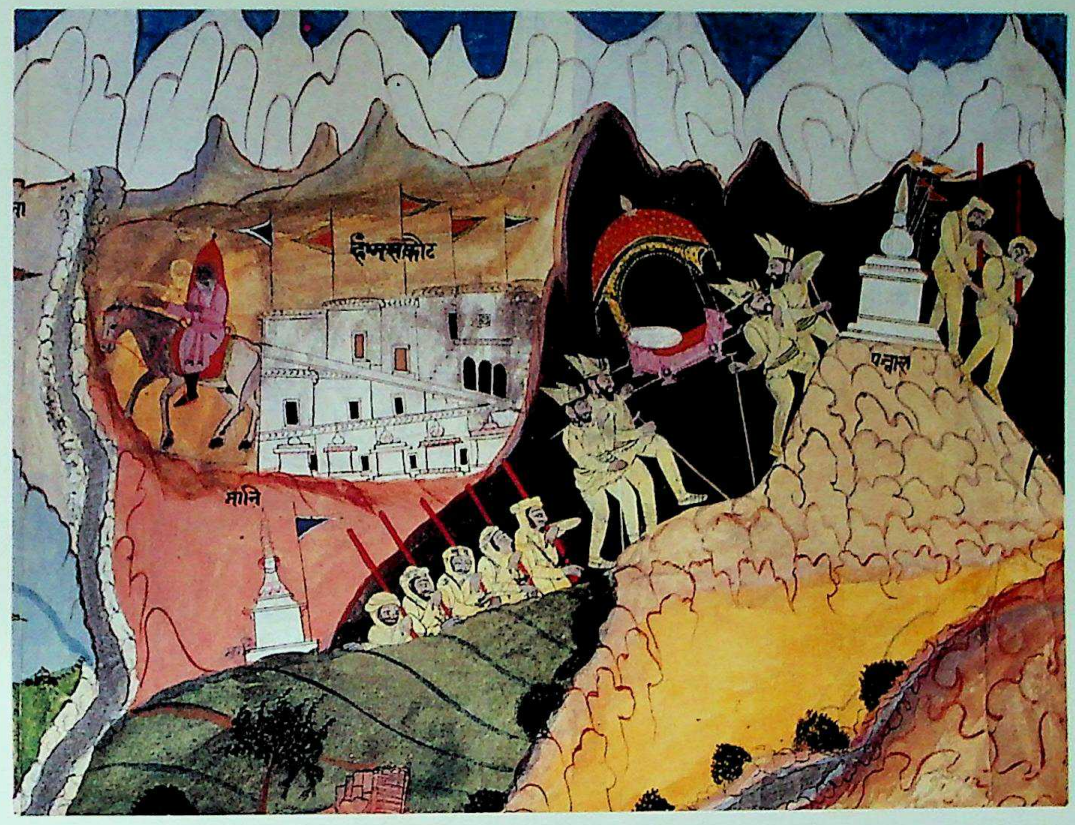
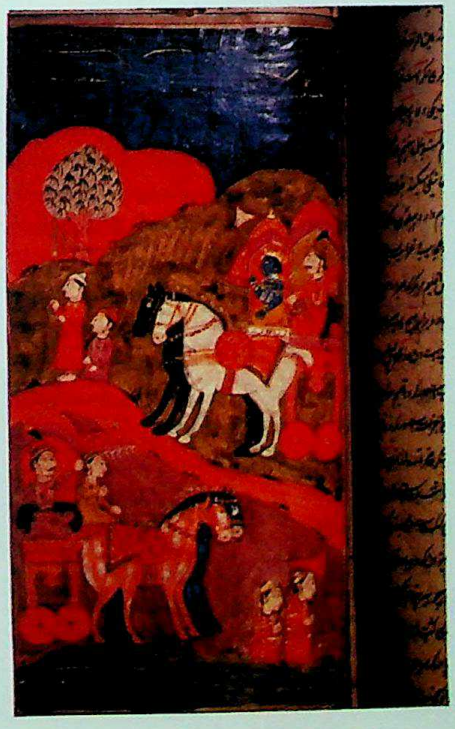


M16. Fragment from a painted scroll: Zorawar Singh's army marching through the mountains.



M17. Folio from a Ms. of the *Mahabharata*: Krishna drives Arjuna's chariot into the battlefield.

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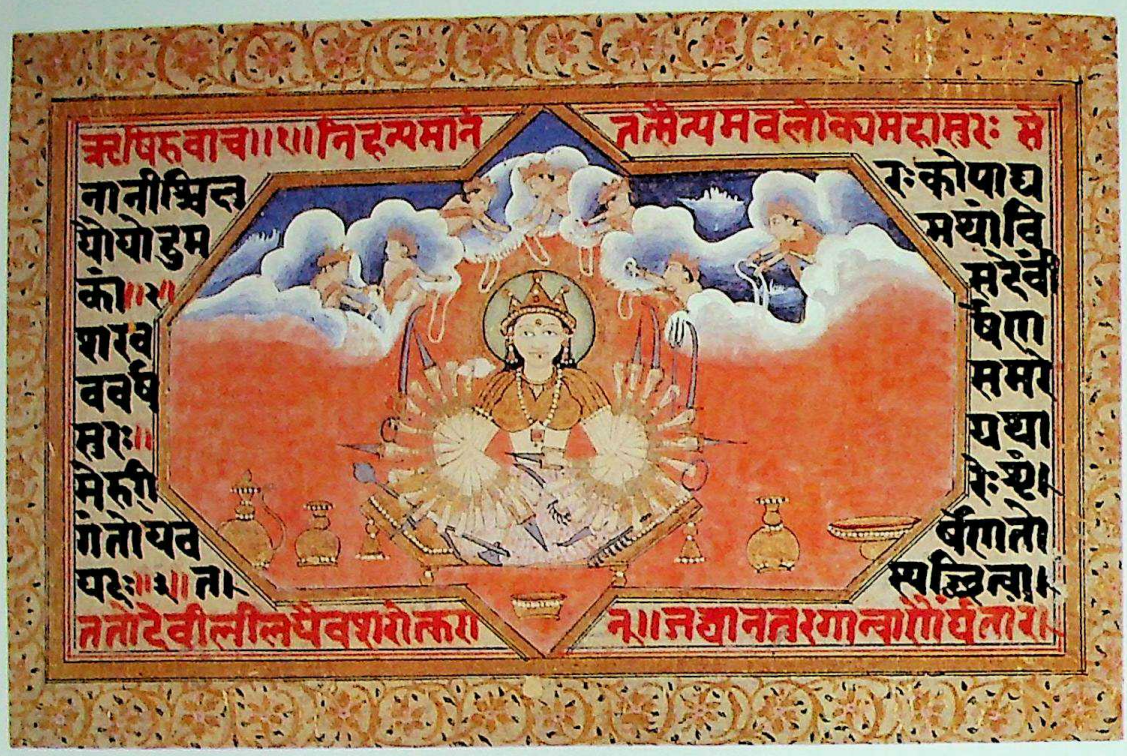
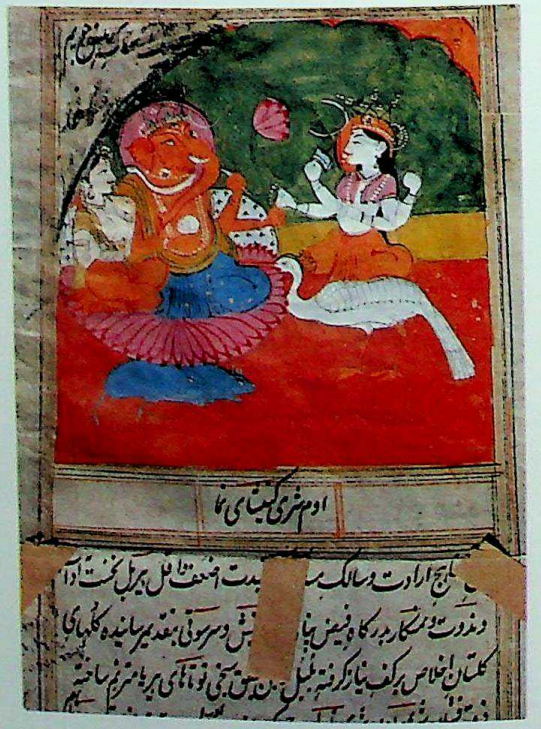


M18. Folio from a Ms. of *Devi Mahatmya*: Glorification of the Great Goddess.

M19. Folio from a Ms. of the *Bhagavad-gita*: Vasudeva carries new-born Krishna across the Yamuna.



M20. Folio from an Anthology of Sacred Texts: Ganesha and Saraswati invoked.

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M21. Folio from a sacred manuscript: Sodhi Bhan Singh paying homage to Mahakala.

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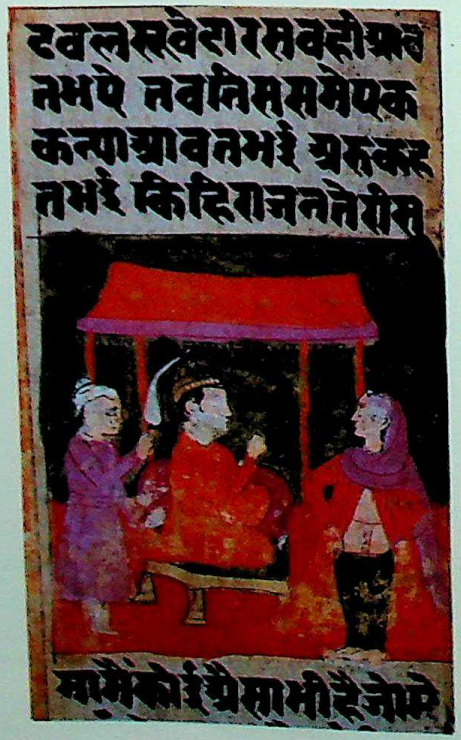
M22. Folio from a Ms. of the *Mahabharata*: The Game of Dice, and other scenes.



M23. Folio from a Ms. of the *Rati Rahasya*:
A woman exposes herself before a Raja.

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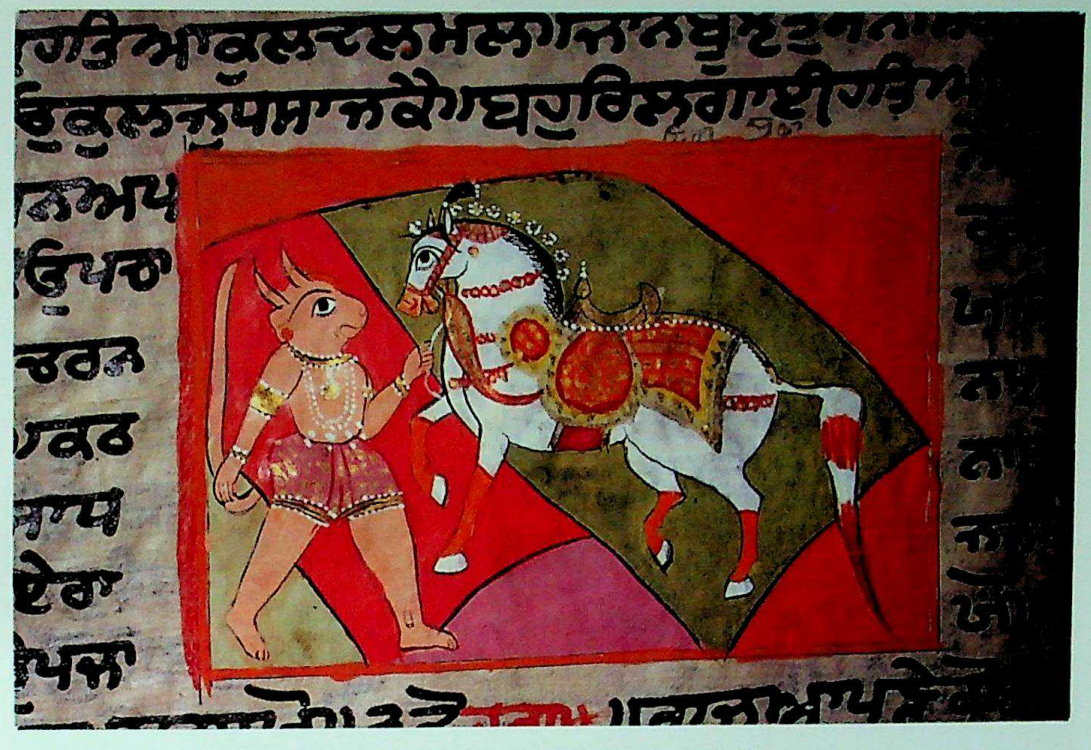
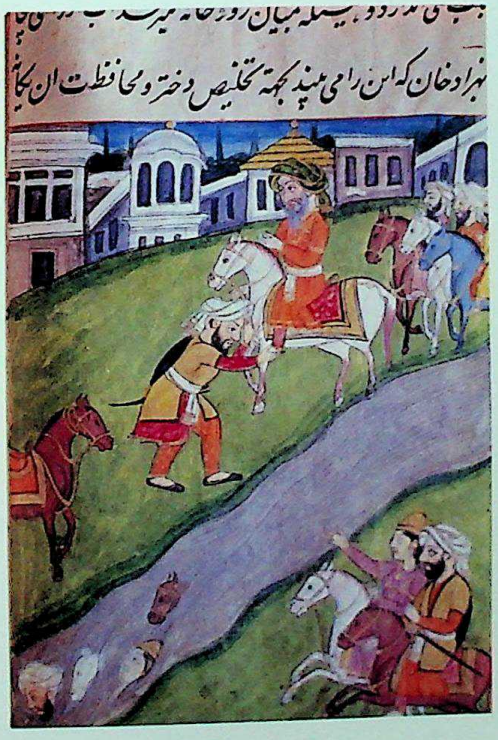
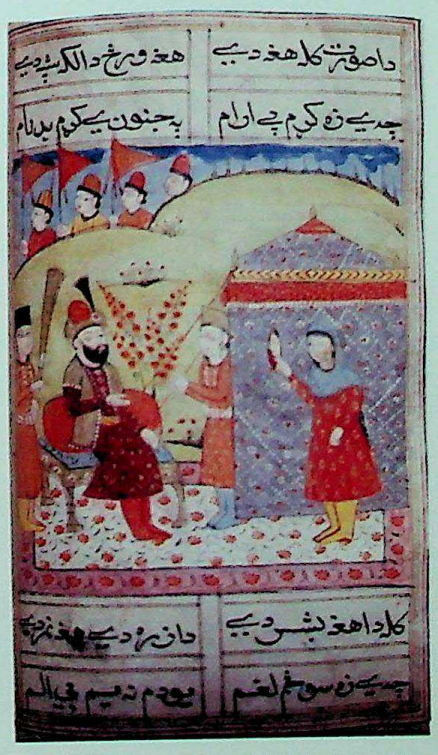


M24. Folio from an Anthology of Poetic Texts: A demon seizes the sacrificial horse.



M25. Folio from a Ms. of the *Qissa-i Chahar Darvesh*: Happenings around a river in flood.



M26. Folio from a Ms. of A Selection of Love Lyrics: A Royal Visit.

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M27. Folio from a Ms. of the *Devi Mahatmya*: The Goddess emerges from the *yajna*-fire.

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M28. Folio from a Ms. of the *Avatara Charitavali:* Vishnu's Kalki *avatara.*

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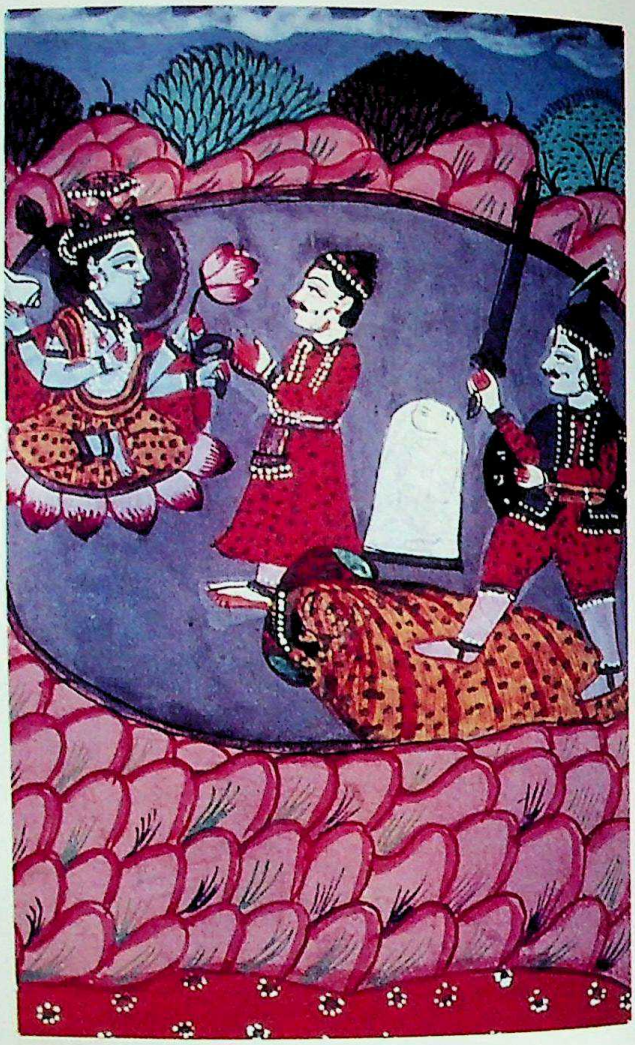
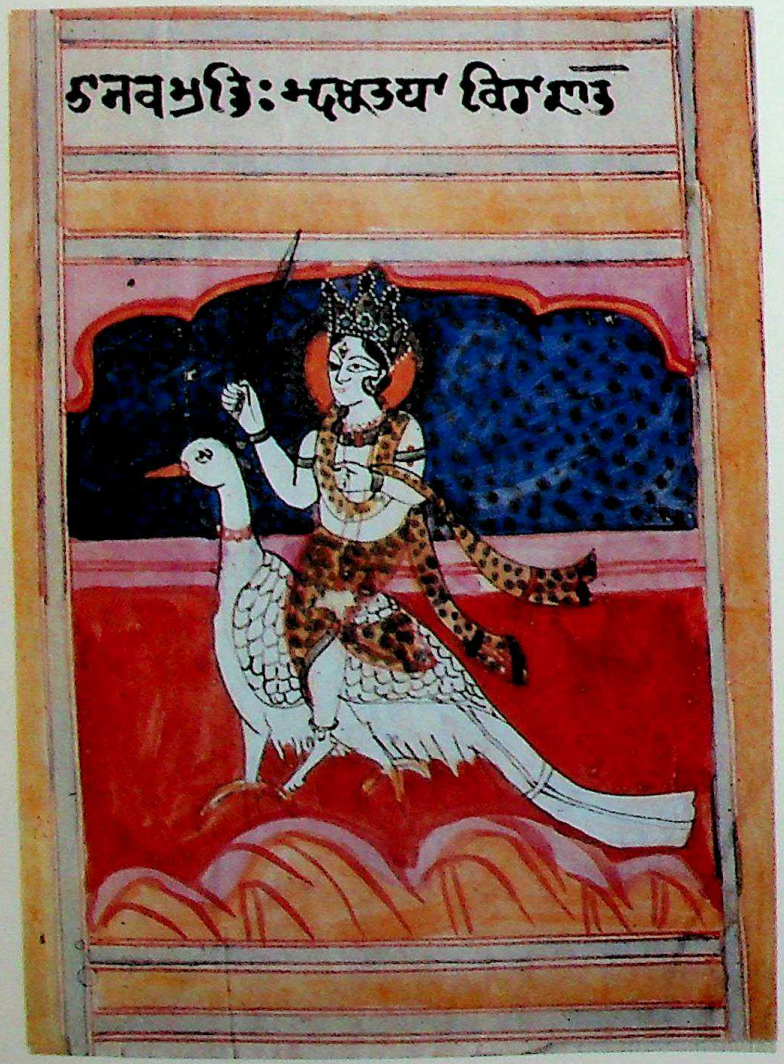


M29. Folio from an Anthology of Vaishnava Texts: Muchukunda praying to Vishnu.



M30. Fragment of a horoscope scroll: The Krittika *nakshatra*?

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same hand, even though a common conception binds them. If there was more than one painter responsible for the work, one can see that influences had come in from two different sources, the Pahari and the Rajasthani styles, with which the painters must have, at some point of time, come into contact. The opening illustration which serves more or less as a frontispiece has the familiar, expected images of Ganesha and his consort and, facing them, the goddess Saraswati, in a standard rendering. The deities are shown seated on delicately painted purple and pink coloured full-blown lotuses. The *vahanas* of the deities, the rat and the *hamsa* are drawn much like they generally are in Kashmiri paintings. Much decoration around the figures, canopies, *chhatras* etc. is brought in by the painter to suggest the majesty of these deities that preside over all auspicious enterprises and all things concerned with learning. The delicate handling of the figures apart, what makes an impression in the painting is the elaborate patterning on the garments worn by the deities, and the superb band of illumination in gold and lapis-blue into which the figures are integrated. The ornamentation occupies the left half of the horizontal page and goes beyond the confines of what must have served as invisible margins, like some laterally painted *sarlauh*. The workmanship of the entire leaf is very accomplished.

The second illustration, placed at the opening of the *Sandhyopasana* text, shares much of the character of the first one. It shows the five-headed goddess, Sandhya, seated upon a *hamsa* and attended upon by a maid-devotee. She is seen full face in the central head, the other four heads spreading out in three-quarter profile, two each facing in opposite directions. All the heads are differently coloured; gold, blue, red, white, sandal-coloured, following the iconography used in Kashmiri work, and the convention developed for rendering these multiple heads of the deity. As in the painting of Ganesha and Saraswati, a clear architectural, regal setting is established, the goddess being placed on a lotus-seat upon a *hamsa* in front of a pavilion, finely delineated, from under which curtains are seen parted in the middle as if to reveal the goddess, or to establish her majestic presence. Once again, the image is integrated with an elaborate illumination in gold and lapis-blue, the integration of the pattern not being as subtle as in the previous leaf. The dresses are finely patterned, in a departure from the summary treatment they generally receive; even the devotee figure's *choli*, skirt and veil having elaborate patterns in gold against green, red and scarlet. Her face owes much to Pahari influence; a Kangra model comes to the mind.

One sees this even more emphatically in the painting in which Vishnu is seen lying on his serpent-couch, Sesha, with his consort, Lakshmi, massaging his feet. The faces, both of Vishnu and Lakshmi here, obviously owe much to Kangra work, but the rest of the work shows strong Kashmiri affiliations; the full-blown lotus emerging from Vishnu's navel, the figures of Brahma, Shiva, Parvati and the cow, all taken from Kashmiri models. This apart, the treatment of rising, curved planes in the background, in blue, red, yellow and green, the rendering of the trees peeping from behind the curves at the top, the silvery, placid surface of water with a profusion of lotuses, are all familiar. It is just that they are more finely rendered here than is commonly seen.

What departs from this Kashmiri-Pahari fusion of styles is the illustration placed at the head of the *Saundaryalahari* section of the manuscript. Here, against a lush forest foliage background, and under a sky that is streaked with a wavy white cloud stretching unbroken fashion along the length of the painting, Shiva is shown seated, in conversation with Parvati, while the Nandi bull sits alertly at left. This painting, contained within illuminated margins, is set, symmetrically, within an elaborate illuminated panel of an unusual richness and patterning. The effect is lavish, and is enhanced by the fineness of detail in the figures and the foliage etc. The model that seems to be somewhere in the background is Rajasthani, the two figures especially leaning in that direction. But clearly the stylistic affiliation of the work is also Kashmiri. If the Kashmiri element

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appears a little subdued, it is because of the predominance of gold and green in the painting; one misses the oranges and purples and yellows that so dominate in other works, Shiva's nimbus takes the familiar pyramidal, pipal-leaf form but is in stark, yellowish gold. At that point from nowhere in particular a Kashmir purple and pink lotus dangles from above, cutting across the top margin and brushing gently against the elaborate nimbus.

M. 15. THE *BHAGAVADGITA*
Coll: Shri Krishna Museum, Kurukshetra
Acc. No. 346/91

Exact number of folios is not known: 14 cm x 19 cm; light beige, slightly glazed paper, Sanskrit in Devanagari script; 10 lines of text on a page within a 10x14 cm; panel with gold, black and red rules, 4 miniatures, each measuring on the average 6.5 cm x 11 cm; placed within illumination along the borders in azurite blue and gold floral patterns on the margins, rather sparse; within modern cloth covers, stitched at left; no date or colophon.

The complete text of the *Bhagavadgita* opening with details of rituals of recitation, beginning with the words, *Om namo bhagvate vasudevaya* makes up the work. Shri Vedavyasa is identified as the (presiding) *rishi* of the text; *anushtupa* as being the *chhanda,* Shri Krishna the *Devta,* and so on. The *Bija, Shakti, Kilaka,* and the *Nyasa* (details follow), are suggestive firmly of the fact that the text was used for daily recitation in a ritualized manner.

The opening folio has a small text panel placed inside an elaborate, but weakly executed surround of illumination, the effect being essentially achieved through the alternating gold and black in which the lines of the text are scripted. From folio 1B, the regular text takes over, 10 lines to a page, an occasional line or key phrase being scripted in red. On this page, in the centre, a few words are written in gold letters. Likewise, on the concluding folio, where the text of the eighteenth chapter ends, the last two words are scripted in gold again The attempt evidently is to invest the sacred text with a measure of sumptuousness even if the manuscript does not have the very high degree of finish and quality that some copies of the *Bhagavadgita* achieve. The calligraphy is bold and competent, and relatively free of errors. The illumination is generally of a pleasant appearance, the profuse use of gold in it making an impression. The patterns combine geometric and floral and arabesque decoration, gold scalloped triangular arches marking the centre of all four sides.

The paintings are relatively small in size, each one being placed in the heart of an illuminated page. As in nearly all illustrated manuscripts of this text, the painter has to strain to find accessible images to illustrate the text with. Even though not directly related to the text, except through the reference to the *avatara* doctrine, the principal illustrations in the volume deal with the ten incarnations of Vishnu, Among these, Buddha is shown as a blue-bodied figure, with four short arms wearing a Vaishnava tilak on the forehead and seated in *samadhi* with eyes closed, as a devotee on either side blows upon a conch shell. The arched structure above the place where the Buddha is seated is of a very uncommon kind, boldly rendered, blue in colour, and rising roughly like an unfamiliar *shikhara*. It is almost as if the painter is making a reference to the Jagannath image in distant Puri, something which many painters from the Hills drew upon in rendering the Buddha.

The incarnations apart, the standard image introduced is that of Arjuna standing, gaining a vision of the Vishvarupa or cosmic form of Vishnu/Krishna, with a group of *devta*/animal/demon-heads sprouting around the principal head of Vishnu in a nimbus-like fashion, evoking the majesty and the wonder of the

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vision. Other images that the painter brings in, with reference not strictly to the text of the *Bhagavadgita*, but to the life of Krishna. Thus, Krishna stealing butter while his mother Yashoda churns milk; Krishna with the stolen clothes of the gopis in the *vastraharana* episode; the *rasa* dance of Krishna and the *gopis*, with the multiple figures of Krishna alternating with those of the *gopis* in a circular dance.

The paintings are all rendered in characteristic Kashmiri colours, much orange, purple, mauve, green and yellow, with highlighting in gold, being used. The figures are generally short but show the unusual feature of having large, staring eyes that occupy nearly one-half of the face when seen in profile. The areas around the eyes are prominently darker, with the corners of the eyes shown markedly pink as if picking up a convention from a style of painting native to the place where this manuscript may have been copied and illustrated. The backgrounds are uniformly flat, but several colours in irregular areas are used, suggestive of different planes and spaces. The interiors are marked by roughly drawn panels hinting at niches in walls, but there is no suggestion of depth. Registers are clearly established, as in the case of the scene of Parshurama *avatara* killing Sahasrabahu, his severed arms lying scattered on the ground and his long hair firmly in the grip of Parshurama. While the major part of the painting treats of the scene, at the right, in two squarish panels, placed one on the top of the other, the Kamadhenu cow, and Parshurama's father, Jamadagni, are shown, the sage in front of a small shrine with Shaligram stones. Characteristically, in the manner of Kashmiri pandits at worship, Jamadagnni wears a *kantopa*-cap with flaps covering the ears and the back of the neck.

There is the occasional, impromptu innovation on the painter's part, as in the *rasalila* scene which is conceived in concentric circles, the innermost with the image of Krishna and Radha under a tree with a cow, and the outer circle with the dancing figures of gopis alternating with Krishna. One sees this again in the Vishvarupa form where, in the conglomerate of heads around Vishnu, the head of Shiva is rendered with the stream of the Ganga falling from his locks straight into the hollow of the *shankha* that is held in the upper left arm of Vishnu, a magnificient, mysterious continuity and relationship between water and space—Ganga and the *shankha*—being established. Innovatively, again, the tree on which Krishna sits with the *gopis'* clothes in the *vastraharana* painting, rises from the middle of the waters, not, as is usual, on the river bank. The water here, as in the scene of the Varaha *avatara*, is dotted regularly with lotuses blossoming in profusion against a silvery surface.

The copy is not dated, and there is no colophon giving any other information. It is likely to have been made, however, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

M. 16. TWO PAINTED SCROLLS
Coll: Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares
Acc.No. 6830, 6831.

Long continuous scrolls with joined sheets of paper, 55 cm x 618 cm., 55 cm x 945 cm; light brown Sialkoti paper with backing; inscribed with brief captions containing place names and topographical features, and some events, in *Devanagari* characters; no borders or margins, the painting being flush with the edges; no text apart from the brief inscriptions: introductory text, if any, is now missing; the painted area exactly the same as the dimensions of the scrolls; no illumination; no date or colophon.

Pub. Chandramani Singh.

This 'visual document'—it is difficult to categorise it as a manuscript—is perhaps without a parallel in Indian art. The size of the two scrolls by itself

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establishes that, and when one realises that not only are these two scrolls artificially split from each other, but also that there must have been other sections both at the beginning and at the end, the dimensions of 'the document' take on truly serious proportions. The size apart, it is the theme and the treatment that makes these painted leaves a unique object, for what is recorded in them is a long and arduous campaign through one of the most difficult terrains in the world, the mountainous area of Kishtwar, Ladakh, Yarkand etc. It can be seen as a record made from experience and observation, at the very least a recollection or reconstruction of events and descriptions heard from eye-witnesses, of the topography, architecture, the landscape of this area, topped and surrounded as it is by high snowy mountains, filled with lush green valleys streaked by countless streams, and dotted with houses, huts, outposts, forts and monasteries.

The theme recorded is the intrepid campaign of 'Wazir' Zorawar Singh into Ladakh for subduing it and establishing over it control on behalf of his master, Maharaja Gulab Singh, who was then master of Jammu, but not yet the Maharaja of Kashmir, Zorawar Singh, a Kahluria Rajput, belonged to Bilaspur, and had entered Gulab Singh's service. This campaign was undertaken in the most difficult circumstances, and an army of Rajputs of Jammu, the Gaddis of the Chamba territories, mercenaries from the hill-states of Bilaspur, Kulu etc., and the local population vaguely referred to in the inscriptions as "Fauj Bhotan di" [the army of the Bhotas]. There are scenes in these scrolls that reconstruct a quiet and peaceful life in the lower valleys: shepherds playing upon flutes with their flocks of sheep and goats around them; animals in their natural surroundings, small bazaars, women wending their way to streams to bathe, bridges thrown across small rivulets, little shrines scattered over the landscape in the midst of rice fields and stacks of wood. There are also, on the other hand, scenes of raging battles; garrisons firing long muskets at approaching contingents of soldiers, generals warming themselves over fire, lamas moving towards monasteries; priests seated around enormous images installed inside monasteries. While some of these scenes could be seen as generalized renderings of the goings on in the valleys and the high mountains, and the march of the armies, some vignettes forcibly point to the fact that many of these scenes must have been personally witnessed by the artist or described to him in graphic detail by eyewitnesses. When one sees two Bhota soldiers being washed away in a hilly torrent and the event is precisely captioned to draw attention to this, or when a goat is sacrificed prior to a march in the presence of a general leading the armies who has taken his shoes off for offering prayers, a true sense of immediacy can be felt in this visual record. Unoccupied palanquins carried by Gaddi soldiers in their distinctive conical caps are taken up difficult slopes; a warrior is surrounded and overpowered physically by the enemy; a general takes a breather and warms himself on a fire while his soldiers fight a pitched battle at a slight distance; and so on. There is history in these scrolls.

It is not possible to logically trace the course of the campaign from the scrolls as they are now joined and preserved, for at several points segments have been so pasted together that many have nothing to do with their neighbouring segments. It would seem as if what survived of these monumental paintings was in the form of large sheets which were joined together, possibly by a dealer, before they were brought to the Museum. Even the two scrolls as they have survived must not have been originally conceived as separate works: some continuity must have belonged to the entire record. What one gains from viewing these now is only a partial glimpse of the work that must once have had an inner unity and logic.

The reading of the scenes as they are laid out on these sheets is not easy, for like other maps or topographical sketches made in the traditional manner in India, nothing is seen from a fixed point of view. When one spreads the scroll and views it from one point, huts and forts and mountain tops seem to be painted

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upside down, while other huts and forts and mountains seem to be facing in the right direction. Evidently, these sheets were meant to be 'read' by moving them around and making sense of them through this manual or visual manipulation. In the case of the present scroll, the reading is even more difficult for very often the scenes rendered are of valleys and ravines with streams flowing in their middle and high mountains looking down upon them from either side.

Who commissioned this work, and when it was comissioned, is not easy to guess at. The general, Zorawar Singh, may well have decided to take painters along with him on this campaign—the Mughals with painters in their entourage come to the mind—; it could have been the Maharaja who decided to have a record of this extraordinary campaign reconstructed afterwards; or it could well be some other general who survived the campaign and decided to commission the work. Only one thing is certain: that the work was not undertaken by a painter or group of painters on their own and then offered for sale.

This work has been seen, upto now, as a document of 'Pahari painting', Sikh elements are also pointed out in this, especially in respect of dresses, weaponry etc. It would seem, however, that the work is a collaborative effort. While Pahari and Sikh elements are discernible—the rendering of figures, and types especially being pointers in this direction—it is more than likely that associated with this artistic effort was a painter trained in the Kashmiri style. The work as a whole does not fit into any any clear category: Pahari, Sikh or Kashmiri. The nature of the work in itself may have been without a precedent and hence demanded of the painters, whoever they were, fresh energies and approaches. It does seem, at the same time, that there is a clear Kashmiri input into the work. The ability of Kashmiri artists to freely innovate and adapt themselves to new demands make it logical for one to arrive at this conclusion. At the same time, in the treatment of some features also, like sprawling, continuous ranges of mountains, a Kashmiri hand can perhaps be detected. The colouring of large areas in purple, mauve and pink, so familiar from other Kashmiri work, is seen in dominance. Occasinally the treatment of trees, summary and folkish, as also the silvery/mica effect in water, recalls Kashmiri models.

The work as a whole may not be credited exclusively to Kashmir but some Kashmiri hands do appear to have been at work in the preparation of this extraordinary document.

M. 17. THE *MAHABHARATA*
Coll: Panjab University Library, Chandigarh
Acc. No. 456

Folios: 31.5 cm x 16.5 cm; light brown paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* script within panels, 23 lines to a page, surrounded by gold and blue rules on the margins; x cms. in size; 19 paintings, each occupying a full page facing the text, averaging in size 21.5 cm x 11.5 cm; old leather covers with stamped medallions; no date or colophon.

The standard Persian text of the translation from Sanskrit seems to have been used in this manuscript, possibly with some modification in the renderings of names, Krishna thus becoming, 'Shri Krishna Jiu', Vyasa becoming 'Sri Vyas Jiu' apparently out of deference. At the end again, where the grace of God is invoked upon the reader of the text, Sanskrit terms like *mukhi* etc. are used. If any changes in the standard Persian version were made as a matter of routine for a Hindu patron for whom the manuscript was copied, no indication of it is available in the text. There is no colophon giving date, place, name of patron, scribe or painter. The text simply ends by giving brief information about how the book came to be titled as *Mahabharata,* and recounting the benefits that accrue from its recitation. The writing, in the words of the scribe, was brought to

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completion through the Grace (*daya*) of 'Shri Krishna Ji'.

Close to the opening, but not on the first page itself, is a composite illustration in two registers, the upper containing invocatory images, and the lower the scene of the beginning of the recitation with the reciter shown with a small audience. In the upper register, under a scalloped arch are placed at left the figure of Ganesha with his consort seated on a lotus, with two enormous rats close to the seat, looking away from each other, their tails crossing. At right is the goddess Saraswati, four-armed, prominently carrying a *veena,* seated cross-legged on a lotus which is placed upon—although, it barely touches it—a large *hamsa*, her vehicle. The background is a flat blue with patterning in gold, roughly resembling the letter 'Om'; at some places. The joint invocation of Ganesha, remover of obstacles, and Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, follows a pattern well-established through usage in manuscript illustrations. The lower half is where the long and eventful narrative begins.

The episodes chosen for illustration are, predictably, among the more prominent in the text: thus one sees the snake-sacrifice of Parikshit, the *rajasuya yajna* of Yudhisthira, the game of dice, the march of the armies, the Pandavas going into exile, their life in disguise at the court of king Virat, Bhishma lying after being felled in battle, and so on. Most of the leaves are schematically built-up, uneven, curving areas painted in different colours suggestive of different planes. In a typical layout of the page, the bottom is occupied by a patch of grey, indicative of water, above which follow areas of violet, orange, green, orange again, and, at the top, the sky in rich blue. Against these flat but patchily applied colours, the action is placed, chariots moving, Pandavas proceeding on foot, groups meeting, horsemen facing each other, persons approaching a seated king etc. Most of the action is placed outdoors, almost as if the painter found it easier to manage those simple planes than to go into the complexities of architectural settings. Even the game of dice is shown in the open, and when the *rajasuya yajna* is being performed, Krishna the presiding deity is shown seated under a tree in the open with fire in front and rituals performed by *kantopa*-clad priests all of whom are seated outdoors.

This could well be an indication of this being a routine, hastily painted manuscript in which the painter was able to make simple, direct statements quickly and without much effort. The compositions seem all to be known to him well; there is at any rate no evidence of fresh thinking in these. At the same time, however, there is the anticipated freedom that one comes upon, in some folios. When Parikshit sits down to perform the great snake sacrifice with the help of priests, thus, the snakes come hurling from all directions, drawn to the fire as metal filings are to a magnet, forming a vivid pattern. The fire takes the usual form of spike-shaped orange flames rising almost straight, but it is the snakes that make the most impression, black, white, brown, yellow and earth-coloured; some of them seen with little crests that are swept behind by swift movement through space. Possibly the most dramatic rendering in the entire manuscript is of the scene where Ashvatthama slaughters in the night Draupadi's sons in a camp. The entire event is placed in an oval enclosure made up, it turns out, by an enormous, orange-coloùred serpent, whose mouth seems to begin to swallow its own body, but the tail is seen curving horizontally above, against rising, peak-shaped orange areas. The conception is bold and captures something of the mystery and the treachery which belonged to that night. Interestingly, this illustration is placed 'upside down' facing the text. It is difficult to explain this 'error' on the painter's part unless one takes the view that a deliberate reversal or de-centering was the aim, as in some Tantric manuscripts.

There is not much energy, apart form an occasional flash, in the scenes. One is especially struck by the relative listlessness of the Yadavas as they destroy each other, using reeds as weapons. The figures are short and devoid of much movement; the angles at which the bodies bend are unconvincing; a lack of

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engagement marks even the battle scene and places; the lamentations of the women whose menfolk have been killed in battle are accompanied by stiff gestures. In the scene of Bhishma lying stricken on the battlefield, the painter even eschews such an important detail as his 'bed' being made of the arrows that had pierced his back. Again, as Krishna appears in his Vishnu form to Bhishma and the men gathered around him, the old hero appears to be lying on a normal, raised bed, more a man at rest than a warrior felled in battle. There are no surprises in the conventions that the painter employs; the human figures, the dresses, the treatment of the trees, the chariots, the sky, the canopies, etc. are all familiar. Here, as in so many *Shahnama, Bhagavata* and *Mahabharata* leaves, the horses raise their legs in the same stylish fashion, their lotus seats are barely touched by the deities, the objects that are supposed to be between figures, like one *chaupad* board here, or the book-rest from which a reciter reads, are placed higher up, viewed from above, as if behind and not between persons. The roughness with which the flat background colours are filled, especially the green, and the summary treatment of the sky with an occasional streak of gold or lightning, grate a little. The manuscript seems to have been written and painted in the middle of the nineteenth century.

M. 18. THE *DEVI MAHATMYA*
Coll: Museum Rietberg, Zurich; ex-Collection Alice Boner
Acc. No. RVI 1633-1667

Number of folios unknown, but perhaps about 70; 12.5 cm x 19 cm; light brown, glazed paper; Sanskrit text in *Devanagari* characters, 11 lines to a page on the average, within panels measuring 6x11.2 cms; with blue, red rules and gold margins surrounded by decorative floral borders edged by red, blue, and red rules; 35 paintings have survived, some of them damaged and repaired, all placed within octagonal panels with projecting triangles at top and bottom, measuring 4.5 cm x 9 cm at their broadest points, surrounded by text on all sides; modern, album-like covers; no date or colophon.

In its present state, the group of 35 miniatures, all on folios with text on both sides, represents only a fragment of what must once have been a fully illustrated, sumptuous manuscript of this celebrated text. The last of the surviving folios bears no. 64; it is roughly within these leaves that the entire text of the *Durga Saptashati* taken from the *Markandeya Purana,* also known as the *Devi Mahatmya* or the *Chandipatha,* together with the preliminary sections, including the *argala,* the *kilaka,* the *nyasa* and the *Devi-Kavacha stotras* was accommodated. The preliminary folios, not covered by the 700 verses, do not have the letter code *cha* on the borders, signifying perhaps that they were essentially seen as being outside the scope of the *Devi Mahatmya* in its standard text form. The manuscript was evidently not meant only to be treasured and kept, but was put to active use, judging from the inclusion of all the *mantras* at the end of various sections, essentially invocations aimed at aiding the reciter or the performer of a *yajna* in honour of the Goddess in proper ritual form.

The pages bear a rich, sumptuous look. While the outer edges are bare, the text panels are surrounded by extremely finely illuminated borders, each slightly different from the other even when bearing a generally similar look. The patterns essentially are stem and flower meanders, or geometric shapes, done in gold interspersed with green and red. At places, flowers are placed within circles set very close to each other, but always using gold with a touch of brown at the edges. Only one leaf, from among those that have survived, folio 16r in which the Goddess is shown triumphant over the demon *Mahishasura,* the illumination of the border is markedly different. The background colour there is a deep lapis

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blue against which exceptionally fine floral work in gold is done. This is evidently with a purpose, for this leaf is meant to stand out from the others, being devoted to the most celebrated of all the exploits of the great Goddess. While the text is written in black, select words, captions and chapter endings etc. are written in red, each page thus acquiring a liveliness of visual effect even when not illuminated. Corrections have been made in the text with *hartal* or yellow-orpiment, the text made error free in view of its ritual significance and the context of its use.

The paintings are strikingly delicate and precisely coloured. They aid and interpret the narrative densely even though there are gaps in the story. It is not unlikely that, in its original state, each folio of the manuscript was adorned with a painting. Even as it is now, the manuscript bears a precious look, everything in it, the calligraphy with its alternating black and red characters, the illumination, the decorative cartouche that serves as a frame for the paintings, and of course the paintings themselves, makes it one of the richest illustrated manuscripts that can be linked with Kashmir. When the folios are handled and turned, as they were meant to be, the colours shine, and the gold glistens with magnificent effect. The colours are finely harmonised on these pages, the reds, the yellows, the blues, the oranges, and the mauves very tightly woven together and distributed. In the backgrounds of many of the folios, a flat bright orange red dominates: the line of horizon is almost straight and above it appear little white clouds, like tufts, against an indigo sky that fills every nook of the geometricized space at the top. The earth is generally coloured a light green which stretches down into the triangle projecting at the bottom and is topped by a straight line towards which the green of the ground steadily lightens, or which turns into a soft bank of yellow or orange. Neither the background nor the ground remain exactly the same, however, in all the paintings. There are leaves in which the entire surface from top to bottom in the background is filled with an orange red, earth and sky alike disappearing, but this happens when the action is sanguine and fierce battles rage. Towards the end, when Shumbha is killed and peace returns to the earth, the background becomes a flat green, all red being drained out of the picture. Clearly there is thought behind these decisions. Greys, greens, are likewise introduced in the background or in the earth to coincide with a mood or a context. It is all done with fine understanding.

In this respect, and in respect of some of the conventions used by the painter, one begins to see conscious departures from the standard Kashmiri way of rendering things in illustrated manuscripts. The drawing of figures is different and generally far more fluent and delicate than often seen. Hair, for instance, is not treated like a flat back mass, the painter taking delight in rendering single strands. Jewellery is far more precisely rendered than is usual. When a landscape as demanded by the narrative is brought in, in folio 64r for instance, where the stable aspect of the earth is shown with all elements, water, hills and trees in their proper places, there is far greater understanding of space than commonly seen. Mountains are rendered in two distinctive, almost opposed styles; one sees bare rocky hills piled together, reminiscent of Persian/Mughal works, but one also sees snowy peaks and rocks with jagged edges marking the Goddess's abode in the mountains. The treatment of multiple arms again shows different approaches within the range of illustrations, the Goddess sprouting numerous arms, as the text demands, from painting to painting. At some places, as in the folio showing the emergence of the Goddess as a pile of light, the arms fan out from the elbow in a circular pattern, making twin circles of energy around her; but in other paintings, like that which interprets the glory of the Great Goddess with her ten heads and twenty arms, the arms proceed from the shoulders, in a clear departure from the standard Kashmiri convention.

Through this, and through the aspect of the figures that the painter renders with uncommon ease, one sees a clear amalgam of styles in this manuscript.

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While the illumination and the calligraphy remain emphatically Kashmiri, in the paintings a Pahari input is discernible, the style that one associates with the family of Sajnu of Kangra possibly providing a major inpulse. How this fusion came into being—whether the manuscript was made at Jammu where Pahari influences were strong, or whether any of the sons of Sajnu who are known to have been active at Jammu, was involved—would remain a matter of speculation. There could be little doubt, however, that this work moves consciously out of the mainstream of Kashmiri painting without losing sight of its ancestry and its broad stylistic affiliation.

The pages of this manuscript are filled with the true spirit of the great text which is recorded and visually interpreted in them. Everything is done with great intelligence and understanding. There are tranquil scenes, with the Goddess appearing in them in her gentle aspect, quietly seated, shedding grace, inviting meditation upon her form, urging the devotees as it were to approach her with their desires. At the same time suddenly everything erupts into frenzied action, she and her hordes pouncing upon the enemy, filling the battleground with streams of blood, heads lying scattered about, decapitated bodies crowding the field of battle. There is great accomplishment in these leaves, and when one sees the Goddess full face, enthroned, objects of worship all around her, countless arms holding *ayudhas* forming aureoles around her body, gods emerging from behind rimmed clouds in the sky, one becomes aware of an unusual talent at work in these pages.

The work appears to stem from the middle of the nineteenth century.

M. 19. THE *BHAGAVADGITA*
Coll. National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 66.98

Folios 81; 20.5 cm x 12 cm; light brown glazed paper; Persian in *nastaliq* script, 10 lines to a page, text in panels 15 cm x 7.5 cm with rules in gold, blue and red; 12 paintings with text panels, with text above and below, averaging in size 12 cm x 7.5 cm; *sarlauh* in gold, purple and blue, with an *unwan* in rectangular panel with the words '*bismillah-al rahman-al rahim*' [in the name of God, the Merciful and the Benevolent]—illuminated margins in gold around the first illustration and the opening page; modern leather covers in green with geometrical and floral patterns stamped in bright gold; no date or colophon.

A note, written in Persian on the fly leaf at the beginning of this copy says that this *pothi* of the *Bhagavadgita* is the text of the translation into Persian of the Sanskrit original by Faizi. It is this perhaps that explains the invocatory phrase invoking Allah at the begining of this Sanskrit classic, and apparently not the fact that it may have been scripted by a Muslim scribe. The fly-leaf has other information. It speaks of the copy as having been purchased "at Lahore, in the Kohinoor Printing Press on the 11th of March 1853 (the month and the year are given in the Gregorian calendar), through Munshi Narsingh Rai for the amount of eight rupees". The name of 'Krishan Kumar' of Moradabad also appears here, possibly the original owner of the work. A rubber stamp impressed in purple ink and scripted in English appears at more than one place in the copy: it reads: "Raja Krishan Kumar, Honorary Magistrate, Bilari O&R Rly". When Raja Krishan Kumar acquired this manuscript, or commissioned it, is not recorded. But the fact that he seems to have been a resident of Bilari in Moradabad in U.P. and that the manuscript changed hands in Lahore in 1853 is of obvious interest; clearly, manuscripts travelled and went from one hand into another.

There are several fly leaves which give, in detail, the contents of the various chapters of the *Bhagavadgita*, listing the number of pages devoted to each. This

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helps to establish the fact that the copy was put to frequent use. The hand in which the note recording purchase and these notes of content is different from the hand in which the text is written; the script is also different, being *shikasta*, and not the *nastaliq* in which the text is written.

The *Bhagavadgita* not being a narrative text, illustrations to it are generally confined in most manuscripts to two or three in number, the more dramatic elements being picked; thus the opening scene with Krishna and Arjuna in the chariot, or the Vishwarupa of Krishna. These two episodes appear here, too, at their appropriate places in the text. But so do ten other illustrations, the painter choosing to bring in, at the asking of the patron, illustrations of the ten *avataras* of Vishnu, from Matsya to Kalki, even though there is no direct relationship, except for the fact that the work is Vaishnava and contains the great utterances of Vishnu/Krishna.

Within the range of Kashmiri manuscript illustrations, the paintings are of an uncommonly high quality, the articulation of the figures, the application of colours and gold, and the general finish, being of a superior order. There is in the compositions a sense of involvement and understanding in the way that the painter renders his themes. The colours distinctly blossom on the pages. The purple/violet/orange/blue/green combinations achieve a vivid, sumptuous effect which is heightened by a judicious use of gold.

In the rendering of the opening illustration, with Krishna, it is of interest to see how well the composition, with the chariot in the middle of the page, the landscape in the background, an army on the move at the bottom, is handled, and yet how little understood is the formation of certain elements in the work. The chariot, for instance, seems barely to relate to the two solid wooden wheels, for its body seems not to weigh down the wheels, its artistic structure ending in downward-pointing sharp ends which rest very lightly on them. One is almost certain that the painter had never seen a chariot: he knew nothing about how to handle the structure. This part of the painting therefore serves only as a design, and does not convey any sense of a war vehicle in motion. The army moving in the lower part of the painting is rendered on a much smaller scale than the chariot, a fact to which attention needs to be directed. In the rendering of the Vishwarupa, the other obligatory illustration that should figure in a *Bhagavadgita* manuscript, one sees once again the use of familiar Kashmiri conventions like the circular orb with myriad forms around the head of Vishnu/Krishna standing and the seated, cross-legged figure placed towards the very top of a large, spread out lotus in purple and mauve; the flower seat is shown as if seen from above, the divine form barely touching it rather than firmly seated on it. The intensity of the colours, ultramarine blue, flaming red, orange/yellow, make it into a work that sets it apart from the usual illustrations of this theme.

Other forms, the rendering of a fancifully niched and domed pavilion under which the Buddha figure is placed, the water from which Varaha emerges, are all rendered with remarkable flair and firmness. Trees take spiky, cypress-like shapes in one painting, and appear leafy and richly crowned in others; the rocks are yellow and green at one place, and purple and mauve at another; the background against which the principal action takes place shifts easily from a sage-green to a deep blue, the consideration being the painter adjusting other colours in this composition to other areas of colour. In the rendering of Krishna *avatara*, there is an apparent debt to Pahari painting, the scene reminiscent of compositions from Guler or Kangra, the palace with its guards and Devaki's cell, the wavy river crossed by Vasudeva, the tiger at the other end of the river, Yashoda's chamber, all packed into one painting.

The work may well belong to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the manuscript is in a poor state, all leaves being moth eaten. It is of interest however to remark that the paintings have not suffered much, the pigments probably having helped in keeping the insects at bay.

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M. 20. AN ANTHOLOGY OF SACRED TEXTS
Coll: Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh
Acc. Nos. 3436 to 3456

Number of folios unknown because of the manuscript having been taken apart; 27.5 cm x 12.5 cm, Persian text in *nastaliq* script; within text panels measuring 22.5 cm x 10 cm, with gold blue and red rules along margins; 21 paintings, being only a segment of the larger number that must have belonged to the manuscript when intact; no *sarlauh* has survived but several simple *unwans* within horizontal panels at the begining of different texts that constituted the anthology; most *unwans* feature the words: '*Aum Shri ganeshaya namah*'; a colophon giving the date Samvat 1897 /A.D. 1840. No covers that have survived.

The manuscript from which these surviving illustrated leaves are taken—two leaves are in a private collection—must have been extensive, but the number of folios it is now impossible to ascertain. In fact it is difficult even to determine what text do these leaves relate to. It would appear from whatever has survived of the text on partially painted pages, and from the subject of many of the paintings that occupy the whole page, that it is not one text but several that were included within the same covers in this anthology. Some leaves clearly relate to the *Mahabharata* in its fuller version; some prominent episodes seem to have come from the *Bhagavata Purana*; segments of surviving texts on some pages give details of different *vratas* and their significance, like the *ananta-chaturdashi* and the *shukla ekadashi* etc. Apparently the texts included in the anthology were such as were recited for gaining merit or had moral value; it is fortunate that they also lent themselves to visualisation, for some fine works in terms of painting belong to this manuscript.

In the Persian text, there is a large admixture of Sanskrit terms which are included as they are without being translated into Persian. Thus words like *vrata, papa, dharma, kama, mukti, artha, mahatmya, ekadashi* etc. figure in the text without any interlinear notes or explanations. This leads one to conclude that while the person for whom the text was scripted and the manuscript prepared preferred to have the text in Persian, he had no serious difficulties in comprehending familiar Sanskrit terms. The invocatory words that are entered as *unwans* at the beginning of different sections or texts, words in praise of Ganesha or Saraswati, further strengthen this impression.

Some of the illustrations only occupy the top of leaves; it is below them that the simple rectangular panels with *unwans* are inserted. These illustrations are essentially invocatory in nature for in them figure, in one leaf, Ganesha and Saraswati; in another, Vishnu seated on a lotus; in yet another a Goddess, looking like *Bagulamukhi*, seated on a prostrate male body, in the presence of Shiva and Parvati. There is no narrative interest in these half-page illustrations; they are essentially iconic images made to given specifications: Saraswati is thus shown duly seated on a *hamsa* while, facing her, Ganesha with his consort is seated on a lotus with two rats included as his vehicle and that of his consort. Likewise, Vishnu, four-armed, is seen seated on a full-blown lotus placed in the midst of waters.

While there is competence in these half-page illustrations, the excitement belongs really to some of the narrative episodes that occupy the whole surface of a page. In these there is much inventiveness and control. The painter uses the standard range of flatly applied colours that one associates with Kashmir—purple, violet, mauve, orange, moss green, pink, ochre yellow and ultramarine blue—large areas serving as background and planes covered with these. We also see him use the usual conventions for figures, water, trees, mountains, sky, architecture etc., so that nothing comes as a surprise. But he composes his images

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with much imagination, using remarkable freedom which enables him to do the unexpected. In fact in these leaves one sees episodes that one does not see anywhere else. In one leaf, in an unidentified scene, an emaciated ascetic figure, bare bodied but with an enormous mass of hair, brown locks piled up on his head like a heap, appears in the lower half of the painting in a *bazaar* where a shopkeeper, seen seated inside his shop, is weighing something in a pair of scales held in his hand. In the upper half of the same page, the same ascetic appears in a landscape, standing close to a river that makes its wavy path diagonally across the page. Lotuses blossom in the stream, and buds rim its banks. But four tiny birds seem to have made their nest in the *jata* locks on the ascetics head. He himself, unmindful of this, seems to be engaged in a conversation, an unusually long finger raised, with a red-bodied demon who emerges from the water in the stream. A sense of mystery belongs to this page, and there is the clear feeling that the painter is working on this composition without having recourse to a model.

In another painting, Narada—a *veena* shown gently resting on his shoulder, his face and body remarkably youthful—is seen standing in front of Vishnu seen in his Vishwarupa form of the standard kind that the painters ordinarily include in illustrated manuscripts of the *Bhagavadagita*. The juxtaposition is unusual, but it is not here that the surprise ends. Narada is shown at the edge of an expanse of silvery water which seems to stretch downwards into the lower half of the page Inside that body of water is a little island where sages are seated in conversation, Narada among them, perhaps contemplating upon the nature of Vishnu's *maya*.

Among the paintings there is one that shows the emergence of Shukadeva from fire into which the Rishi Vyasa pours libations; we see scenes from a burning ground with a couple about to consign a child to the flames—could they be Harish Chandra and Taramati?—and then, being saved through Divine Grace, leaving the mortal world in a *vimana* for the heavens; a dead body being carried in a bier while men and women walk by its side and Krishna himself seen twice, apparently involved in the whole turn of events in some way; a camel with a plough entangled in its head and neck, and a pair of bullocks jumping across his back. It is in this strain that the leaves of this uncommon manuscript seem to have been painted, leaving a lot to the imagination, filling one with a sense of wonder.

The quality of the paintings is uneven but generally remarkably high. There would be few parallels, in Kashmiri painting, thus to a leaf illustrating a well known episode from the *Bhagavata Purana,* that of Raja Prithu subduing the earth and milking it. With remarkable flair, here the painter does not only set the various elements of the story in understandable, logical form across the page; he also brings in startling details: we see the cow, the earth in disguise, placed in the middle of a ring of concentric circles, each differently, brilliantly coloured, as if hinting at the various levels of the earth as set out in Hindu cosmology. When Prithu sits down to milk the cow, the Gods themselves descend to witness the great happening. A remarkably conceived mountain form in purple and pink, as if made up of flattened lotus leaves, rises at one end of the page; serpents and other animals are introduced. The page is brilliantly conceived, the painter truly picking up from the text something of the grandeur and the mystery of the events.

The manuscript is now dispersed, but with the dealer who sold these leaves to the Chandigarh Museum, were loose folios of the text. One of these folios, when the paintings were sold in 1966, had a colophon giving the names of Birbal Kaul who translated the texts into Persian, of Vasudeva who was the scribe, and Ishar Das *'shair'* who probable commissioned the work. The copy is dated v.s. 1897/A.D. 1840 .

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M. 21. AN UNIDENTIFIED MANUSCRIPT
Coll. National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 59.155/1-4

Number of folios not known; 52 cm x 54.5 cm; light brown, glazed paper; folios with text now not being available, it is not possible to reconstruct the appearance of text panels etc; the four paintings that have survived have inscriptions in Panjabi written in *Gurmukhi* characters; paintings with rich illumination and floral work with surrounds of narrow bands with flower and stem motif, in gold and colours; borders of some folios decorated with cypress rows in gold interspersed with floral motifs in blue against white background; two of the folios seem to be opening pages facing each other, with much illumination in arabesque pattern and floral ornamentation; no covers; no date or colophon.

It is unfortunately difficult to identify the text of the manuscript to which these very impressive and large-sized folios belong, for the text portion of what must have been a truly large manuscript is now lost. Manuscripts of the Sikh sacred scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib* in this size were often calligraphed and illuminated; the existence of a folio with a schematic representation of eighteen raginis, musical modes, which are mentioned early on in the *Adi Granth* further points in the direction of these folios being in some ways related to a copy of the scripture. If that were so, however, it would be very unusual, for illustrated—as different from illuminated—copies of the Sacred Granth are not known. It is possible that these folios were appended to the sacred text rather than forming an integral part of it.

One of the opening folios (59.155/1) with considerable illumination in gold, lapis and orange filling the background of the painted part in the middle, has the pattern of a twelve petalled lotus—*a dwadashdala kamala*—with its centre prescisely drawn as a circle. Inside this, seated at prayers is a figure of a man surrounded by objects and implements for offering worship. A brief inscription below, on the terrace on which he is seated, reads in Gurmukhi, 'Sodhi Bhan Singh *puja karda*' (Sodhi Bhan Singh at worship). Two deities appear to be the objects of his adoration, Mahakali and Mahakala, both dark bodied, fierce looking, she seated on a tiger skin holding different objects in her eight arms, and he dressed in a tiger-skin standing on a prostrate body placed on a funeral pyre. Behind the Sodhi are seated two figures, one of a priest with a *kantopa* cap, and the other of a grave looking companion. In the twelve petals around the central circle there are various images; starting from the one directly above the central circle, in anti-clockwise order, are figures, identified through brief inscriptions in Gurmukhi, respectively of: 'Kashyapa Rishi', 'Suraj Vanshi', 'Nanakji', 'Angadji', 'Amardasji', 'Ramdasji', 'Arjanji', 'Hargobindji', 'Shri Hariraiji', 'Harikishanji', 'Nariritraja', 'Varuna lakapala', 'Paschimraja', 'Vayu Raja', 'Kuber', 'Tegh Bahadurji', and 'Dasvin Patshahiji'. The images are all abbreviated and terse, but, interestingly, each of the ten Guru is shown here with his wife, and children. Thus, there are two childen with Guru Nanak, two with Guru Angad, and so on, and four boys with Guru Gobind Singh. The great Gurus are shown seated on terraces, or on chowkis, in the case of Guru Harikrishanji, chairs are introduced. The attempt of the artist clearly is to introduce variations in terms of seats, canopies, general setting etc.

Another folio (59.155/3) has a more or less similar arrangement, the central part of the leaf occupied with a ten-petalled lotus, large petals surrounding a central circle. The lotus is placed against a very fine painted floral background which is confined within gold rules. In turn this central square panel is surrounded by a broad panel on all four sides, with small images, placed within arches, twenty-four in number. The central image is that of Vishnu Seshashayi,

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resting on his serpent couch placed in the waters with lotuses blossoming. The numerous hoods of Sesha hang *chhatra*-like over Vishnu's head; his consort Lakshmi sits massaging his feet. On the navel-lotus Brahma is seated. In the ten petals surrounding the central circle are represented several deities including the *lokapalas*. Starting from the image directly atop the circle, in clockwise order, are shown, each inscribed in Gurmukhi characters, 'Indra', 'Agni', 'Dharmaraja', 'Brahma' and 'Lacchmi Narayana'. Most of the figures are shown with *vahanas*. Thus, Indra is seen riding the Airavata elephant and Dharamaraja a black buffalo, but Kuber takes the form of *Ardhanarishwara* with Nandi by his side, and Nirrati is seen riding a camel. In the surrounding border, there are twenty-four images, evidently of the twenty-four *avataras* of Vishnu, not all of them accurately represented. The inscriptions, all in Gurmukhi, however, help. Starting with the image in the centre of the top panel and moving clockwise are represented, 'Dattatreya', 'Narada', 'Sankadika', 'Naihakalanka', 'Baudha', 'Krishna', Sukadeva', 'Ramavatara', 'Vedavyasa', 'Parasram', 'Vamana', 'Narasingha', 'Mohinirupa', 'Manohara;, 'Kachha avatara', 'Matsa', 'Dharm...'. 'Richhabha avatara', 'Raja Pritha', 'Hayagriva', 'Kapil', 'Nara-Narayana', 'Jagya Purukha', and 'Varaha'. The iconographies are very interesting, although not always accurate or accurately inscribed. Thus, Hayagriva does not have the usual horse head; Nara-Narayana are more like Harihara; the 'Dharma...' is in fact a representation of the Kurma Avatara, and 'Manohar' makes a surprise appearance, perhaps replacing Dhruva followed as he is by two demons. All the same, one sees in these abbreviated images the sources of the iconography of the various deities as known to Kashmiri painters, and as so often seen incorporated in illustrated prayer texts.

One folio, the companion of which is now lost (59.155/4) has, in rectangular columns in vertical rows 5,5,4 and 4 images, of 18 *ragas/raginis,* each identified through the same kind of Gurmukhi inscription. One can see '*Rama kali*', '*Gonda*', '*Maru*', '*Tukhari*', '*Kedara*', '*Nat*', '*Prabhati*', '*Kaljana*' etc. represented. The icongraphies vary considerably from those known from other schools of painting, but the general aspect is very similar, *raginis* seen seated by themselves, walking with lovers, wandering in the forest, regarding themselves in mirrors, playing upon the veena, adjusting earrings in their ears, and so on. The *ragas,* on the other hand, appear seated at prayers, listening to music, receiving the homage of bards while an elephant lies dead, sitting with consorts, attended upon by maids. One recognises the iconographies of the well-known Bengali, Kedara, Todi, Gurjari, etc. easily, but these are identified differently here. It is not possible to make a statement about the scheme followed by the painters in the absence of the companion folio which must have contained the remaining *ragas/raginis,* but it would seem as if the painters were broadly familiar with the genre of *ragamala* painting and had some iconographies in their minds. However, the system that they follow here of visulisation seems to be different from that generally seen elsewhere.

The general aspect of all the painted folios is recognisably, emphatically, Kashmiri: the quality of drawing, the colours used, the settings, the figuration, all being very familiar from other works. Oranges, reds, yellows, greens and blues dominate but, above all, there is the ubiquitous presence of the mauve/pink combination which links these with work from Kashmir.

The most ambitious, and impressive, of all the paintings in this group is the one showing the Vishwarupa of Vishnu-Krishna (Acc.No. 59.155/1). What we have here is not the usual form that Vishwarupa takes in so many Kashmiri representations in prayer texts—the central head of Vishnu surrounded by an aureole filled with tiny heads of deities and animals. The form shown here is a colossal image, standing feet apart, legs lightly bent, single head with a conical nimbus, four arms carrying a conch, discus, lotus, and surprisingly, a shesha-like serpent. The magnificantly clad body is filled with innumerable figures and symbols. On either side of this image stands a figure in adoration, dwarfed in

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comparison with the Vishwarupa; Arjuna, clad in battle-dress, at left and, surprisingly, the same figure as appeared on another folio worshipping Mahakala and Mahakali, Sodhi Bhan Singh, identified through a Gurmukhi inscription. Undoubtedly the manuscript was commissioned by him. Who exactly this Sodhi Bhan Singh was we do not know at present. But if he is the same as the person who commissioned a copy of the *Gurbilas,* now in Leningrad, dated 1838, he seems to have taken serious interest in books and paintings

M. 22. THE *MAHABHARATA*
Coll: National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 76.570/573

Number of folios not known; 29 cm x 31 cm; light brown, glazed paper; Hindi text in Gurmukhi characters, 23 lines to a page, within panels, with narrow vermilion borders and blue rules; number of paintings unknown but, presumably, the opening page of each *parva* in the text was painted along the sides, with space for text left in the middle, in squarish or arched shape; the opening page richly illuminated with arabesque patterns, mixed with images placed in circles around the text in the middle which, in turn, is also in circular form within a broad circular surround: loose leaves with no cover; no date or colophon.

The manuscript from which the five folios in the Museum have been detached is now unfortunately lost; but it is fair to guess that it must have been a voluminous work considering the size of the Sanskrit original of which this is a simplified *bhasha* version in Hindi verse. The text seems to have been authored by a poet who styles himself, 'Tahkan Kavi', the words 'kirit Tahkan ki' (the composition of Tahkan) occurring at some places. Another name which is woven into the opening verses of a *parva* section is that of 'Vaisakhi Mal' which may have been the full name of the poet Tahkan.

Each section, like the opening pages, begins with the invocatory words: '*Ek Omkar Satgur Prasad*' which is associated with Sikh scriptural works. After this, the writer moves on to invoke deities from the Hindu pantheon: Ganesh, Saraswati, Krishna, Shiva, and the Goddess Kalika. It all mingles perfectly with no hesitation of any kind. The blessings of the Guru's lotus feet are sought by the poet before he embarks upon the composition of the long and difficult poetic text as a *bhasha* of the great epic.

The calligraphy is very neat, and a certain richness of effect is achieved through the alternating of lines in black ink with key words and important invocatory phrases written in red. On the opening page, the illumination around the central circular text panel seems to have been done first, in gold, lapis blue and red. The surround around the text panel is also, like the illumination, quite finely done and has a flower and stem motif, its patterns and colours strongly reminiscient of papier-mache decorative work. Around the circle of text, in circles of various sizes, different images directly linked with the invocations at the opening are placed; at the top left is the mystic syllable 'Om' with the figures of the deities, Brahma, Vishnu, Ardhanariswara Shiva, and Virabhadra fitted into it; towards the top right, Ganesh and Saraswati; below the Goddess, many-armed, with her tiger, *vahana*; below that Shiva and Parvati on the Nandi bull: directly below the text panel, at the bottom, Brahma, four-armed, holding the *vedas,* seated on a Hamsa; towards the bottom left Vishnu on Garuda; above that directly to the left of the text panel in a small circle a devotee seated on a small wooden stool, with an attendant at the side. This perhaps is an imaginary representation of the author of the work, the poet Tahkan.

On other folios also, with slight variations, a clear scheme is followed, but there is no rigid pattern. On the folio 76.570 on which the '*dyuta sabha parva*' begins, the game of dice is shown at the bottom of the page, below the text,

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while the figures of Brahma and Vishnu appear at left and right, and what seem to be the figures of Raja Janamejaya with courtiers towards the top left and the sage Vaishampayana with his followers at top right. While these panels can be more or less separated from each other, the illustration accompanying the opening pages of the 'Ashvamedha *parva*' and the 'Shanti *parva*' stretch out in unbroken continuity over the spandrel areas formed by the arch-shaped text panel on both these folios. On the *Ashvamedha* leaves the scene of the *Ashvamedha* sacrifice is laid out in segments without these being broken up: Krishna, the presiding deity, at the top, the Ashvamedha horse, below him towards the right, the priests at a slight distance at the extreme right; the Pandavas and their associates appear at the top left, below Krishna, and, further down, at the extreme left, the sacred fire which signifies the sacrifice. On the Shanti *parva* folio, again, the scene is almost continuous, with Krishna at the top right within sight of Bhishma felled in battle, lying down; the group of Pandavas is directly below him and, towards the left at the other end of the pages, the Kauravas are arranged.

Clearly, the painter was freely adapting himself and his compositions to the spaces available. It is as if the compositions which he must have used several times, could be altered and modified, expanded and abbreviated at will. There is no exact copy, it seems, from one manuscript to the other even when the themes, and the general appearance, are the same. This remarkable elasticity, thus, in the painter's approach, and his ability to adjust to different spaces and circumstances is like that of a folk artist, refreshing, unfettered.

The paintings are in a familiar style. The figures are swiftly, summarily drawn, appearing relatively short but with keen looks. The colours are remarkably bold, backgrounds filled with flat planes painted in orange, moss-green, yellow, red, with the sky a rich ultramarine blue. The same range of colours is used in the dresses, furnishings, architecture etc, but always sensitively adjusted to the background. The iconography used for the various deities is well established and familiar, and there are no surprises in this respect. As in some other works of the same theme, like the *Mababharata* in its Persian version in the Panjab University Library (Acc. No. 564), most of the scenes are placed outdoors—very little architectural detail being brought in by the painter. Even scenes that clearly need to be placed indoors, in palaces or pavilions—the scene of the dice-game in progress, for example, or the performance of the Ashvamedha sacrifice are set out in the open, the Kauravas and the Pandavas all seated on a green grassy ground, with even a tree appearing at one side, as if this were happening in a big meadow. The greatest of the chiefs attending the Ashvamedha sacrifice appear, likewise, sitting on grass; only here the painter provides a floating canopy above their heads; but no architecture appears. One could see this as an attempt at making simple visual statements. At the same time, this approach must have made for a quick turnover in painting for the artists.

In this respect, in several details of compositions, especially in the rendering of the scene where Ashvatthama attacks the camp of the Pandavas in the night, one notices a very strong similarity with the *Mababharata* manuscript in Persian in the Panjab University Library. The space here is a little limited, but the manner in which the Pandava camp is shown with a huge serpent forming a protective circle around it is almost the same as in the Persian manuscript. One is led to surmise from this that groups of painters may well have specialized in illustrations of specific themes and texts. The resemblance between the illustrations to this manuscript in Gurmukhi, and the Panjab University Library in Persian, both treating of the *Mababharata* theme, are too strong to be accidental. The scribes in the group might have been able to turn their hand from one script to the other: the painters, with a developed repertoire of images, would then proceed to draw upon it but also make adjustments along the way, keeping considerations of space, the demands of the patron etc. in mind.

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M. 23. *RATI RAHASYA*
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Folios: exact number not known; 22 cm x 11 cm.; light brown, Sialkoti paper; Hindi text in Devanagari characters, 16 lines to a page, within text panels, 17.5 cm x 8.5 cm in size, with a narrow orange coloured panel and gold and black rules along the margin;—paintings averaging in size 7.5 cm x 7.5 sm within text panels, with text above and below; no *sarlauh*; no covers, no date or colophon.

The partially damaged manuscript now with no covers, has no clear title: it simply opens with the words; '*atha Kokashastra bhasha likhyate*', meaning that it is a commentary on the celebrated erotic work, the *Kokashastra* of Pandit Koka. No specific title is used but, somewhere later in the text, the words *Rati Rahasya* occur which could be taken at least as a working title for the present work. This, however, is not the standard version of the well-known treatise of that name for, on the first page, the author is identified as Kavi Dharmasingha. The language of the work is Hindi but in the text several Panjabi words are also found. It is more than likely, therefore, that this *bhasha* is the work of some local author based in the Panjab. The suggestion finds strength in the fact that the turbans worn by some of the male figures are strongly reminiscent of the turbans that had become fashionable in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in the Panjab, principally of the kind that prince Naunihal Singh, grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, is seen wearing in many paintings.

The text seems to be somewhat corrupt and, at places, in pseudo Hindi verse. The opening page which has the name of the writer has the line '*krat kavi Dharamasingha nama varnanam*', followed by a *savaiya*. The whole phrasing is odd, and the word *krit* is clearly misspelt. The text moves on soon to prose, but an occasional 'Sanskrit' expression is employed in imitation of classical compositions. Expressions like *apanean bahan te rakhe* (. . . should rest them on his own arms) leave no doubt about the Panjabi elements in the language. It is possible that the work was composed for the instruction and delectation of a Panjabi patron, a chief or noble perhaps.

The text opens with the usual narrative setting, the story being told of a woman appearing at a Raja's court and challenging the masculinity of all those who are present at the court, leading later of course to the descriptive and 'scientific' part of the treatise which is more a sex-manual than an erotic work. The instruction is addressed by Koka who calls his listener or disciple as his 'son' consistently in the work.

The illustrations which are now badly rubbed, some of them perhaps deliberately by an embarassed late owner, are extremely summary in conception and execution. They occupy the middle part of the page, and the setting, except for an opening painting or two, is always the interior of a simple chamber with an orange- red ground, orange or natural coloured walls, and an arch in the middle within which the space is coloured a flat green. It is often against this rich green ground that the principal figure or figures are placed. There are the usual illustrations of different kinds of sexual union, but also single images of the types of men and women, falling in different classifications like the *padmini, shankhini, chitrini* and *hastini* for the women, and *ashva, vrishabha, mriga* and *shasha* for men. The treatment is extremely summary, the figures rendered without much flair or attention to detail, even though it is easy to see, from the articulation of the animals after which the male types are named, a clear measure of competence and well-practised ease. Perhaps one is not able to judge the quality of the paintings fairly, because of the rubbed state they are in. But one cannot escape the feeling that it is a 'bazaar' kind of manuscript or of a level just above it, swiftly made and certainly for a small price. The rough character of the paintings is emphasised by the manner in which they are coloured: there are

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broad horizontal panels on the walls which are left uncoloured. The effect is not unpleasing, for this results in a break between the orange-red of the floor and the same orange-red of the walls inside chambers, but the appearance is one of carelessness rather than of planned design.

As in other schools of Indian art, erotic works must have figured prominently in Kashmiri work too. Not many manuscripts seem to have survived, but it is certain that better quality manuscripts of this and similiar texts in this category of works were painted by Kashmiri painters. The present copy seems to date from the middle of the nineteenth century.

M. 24. AN ANTHOLOGY OF POETIC TEXTS
Coll: Panjab University Library
Acc. No. 1202

Folios 748; 25 cm x 40 cm; light brown, Sialkoti paper; Hindi text in Gurmukhi script, 13 lines to a page, within text panels with narrow orange surrounds and black rules along the margins; 64 paintings; averaging in size 10x15 cms, within text panels with text above, below and at the sides; some paintings at the beginning placed inside panels, with all borders left blank; two illuminated pages in the beginning with text panel in the centre with relatively small spaces for text; no date or colophon.

After several opening folios with no text and only invocatory paintings placed inside panels with broad borders left blank, the text opens, placed as it is on a folio with rich illumination surrounding the words: *ek onkar satgur prasad* followed by: *Om shri Ganeshaya namah*. Thus, the characteristic invocatory words that stand at the head of Sikh scriptures and those at the head of the usual Sanskrit or Hindi compositions with Hindu themes are brought together, suggestive of remarkable closeness. The script in which the voluminous Hindi text is written in this manuscript is Gurmukhi, establishing that the work relates to the Panjab plains. Evidently, itinirent Kashmiri craftsmen were responsible for its scripting. The script is clear and bold, with several corrections carried out with *hartal* or yellow orpiment used to block out errors. At places where the paintings appear, brief captions to the paintings are written in Persian in the *shikasta* script in corners but this feature is not uniform for at one place where half the space at the lower end of the page is left blank and the other half painted, the words *murat da thaun*, [space for illustration] are written in Gurmukhi characters.

The principal part of the manuscript is taken up by a composition in verse by Tahkan Kavi, the title '*Sri Bharat Parva Purna, Ashva medha* ...' being used. The composition spreads over 36 chapters and essentially treats of extensive episodes from the *Mahabharata* that deal with the *Ashvamedha yajna* performed by Yudhishthira and the sequence of events that it leads to. But this is by no means the only text making up this anthology: there is the story of Chandrabasa, also in verse, in addition to passages relating to the *Ramayana* and the *Krishan Lila*. One could see the work thus essentially as a Vaishnava anthology. The opening invocatory illustrations however move in different directions. There is the obligatory image of Ganesha and Saraswati on one folio; Rama and Sita attended upon by Lakshmana and Hanumana appear on another page; there is also an image of Shiva and Parvati on the Nandi bull being adored by Bhairava.

The clear, bold calligraphy and the competent illumination on the opening pages do not prepare one for the roughness of the illustrations in the manuscript. These seem to have been executed in great haste and with remarkable carelessness that suggests a 'bazaar' kind of approach to the whole work. The work is clearly Kashmiri in conception and execution, but in a distinctly inferior hand. The usual Kashmiri conventions for background colours that serve to demarcate planes are followed, but the areas are so roughly and arbitrarily defined that there

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is the barest resemblance between these backgrounds and those in fine illustrations from Kashmir. The colours are thinly and loosely applied and flat areas of these that appear are horizontal, triangular, rhomboid and the like at will, each colour—orange, purple, green or yellow etc.—contained within coarsely drawn outlines in black. Some of the areas at the edges are even left uncoloured, as if through oversight rather than by design. The paintings are also not always within clearly demarcated panels. Where rules define the edges of the paintings and separate them from the surrounding text, the colours often go beyond the rules and spill briefly on to the areas reserved for the text.

With such roughness marking the paintings, the use of gold in ornamentation on costumes and saddlery of horses etc. comes as a surprise. It is not used in profusion, but the quality of the gold seems to be very high. One sees this especially in the Ashvamedha horse which appears repeatedly in the first, major text in the manuscript. The figures are markedly different in some respects from those usually seen. They are generally tall of aspect, heavy around the middle, and shown with a palpable behind when seated. The eyes are unusually large and staring, as if the inspiration had come from some local folkish style seen by the painters. The usual colours, orange, red, yellow and deep-blue are used in the costumes; the purple and mauve combinations dominate architectural and other features. One notices unusual details such as a tuft of hair sticking out from under the turban at the back of the neck, and the curl of the moustache on the other side of the face seen in profile, prominently painted, a little like the projecting eye in Jaina paintings from Gujarat. While trees with leafy foliage covered with thin pigments are quite common in these pages, at places little squiggles serve for bushes in the landscape. One sees figures of Kashmiri pandits with *kantopa* caps frequently in these pages, and when they hold *malas* in their hands, these are rendered as stiff loops that are painted at a slight angle held at a distance from the body in the hand, Pearls predominate in the jewellery worn by men and women and strands of these pierce the ears so often.

The painted pages are filled with familiar images: the Vishvarupa of Krishna; Krishna and Arjuna in the chariot; armies on the march; warriors fighting; Yudhisthira approaching a tree with his questions; *rishis* performing *yajnas*; the *Ashvamedha* horse being led and followed; etc. There are no surprises in the compositions for the most part. An occasional work stands out however. When the *Ashvamedha* horse emerges from the fire, the fire is very imaginatively treated, in a series of scallops with pointed edges, quite unlike the usual Kashmiri fire with spiky flames. Again, when a lone figure sits in a bleak landscape, as if about to meditate, the menacing tiger that approches it is done with unusual verve, the inspiration for it possibly coming from folkish paintings that the Kashmiri craftsmen might have encountered in the Panjab planes.

The work is not dated but can be placed in the second half of the nineteenth century and seen as an example of swiftly done, bazaar work that retains a memory of fine Kashmiri work but by no means approaches it.

M. 25. *QISSA-I CHAHAR DERVISH*
Coll: Panjab University Library
Acc. No. 564

Folios 290; 18 cm x 12.5 cm, light brown, glazed paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* script within panels,11 lines to a page, with gold, red and blue rules along the margins; 67 paintings, mostly within text panels, with text above and below, but some also occupying a full page, with no text; damaged *sarlauh* and an *unwan* with the words *bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*; double opening page with illumination in gold with fine floral work on the borders and 'cloud' formations within the text panel; modern leather covers; colophon dated A.H. 1255/1839 A.D., giving name of patron and scribe.

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The long Persian text of this famous *qissa,* originally composed by Amir Khusrau, is taken from Mir Aman's prose version that was completed during the regime of the Emperor Muhammad Shah (A.D. 1719-1748). The *qissa* was evidently a popular work, having been illustrated several times elsewhere. This, however, may be the only surviving copy from the Panjab. The work, according to the colophon was completed on the 9th day of the month of Zilhajj, in the year 1255 A.H. It was written at the behest of the 'Diwan of exalted status', Ajodhia Prasad, in the 'insignificant hand' of the scribe Abdullah-al Azim. This part of the colophon with the information is in prose; then follow some verses evidently composed for this volume specially, praising the text, hinting at the generosity and the benefaction of the patron, and offering thanks to the Almighty for having allowed this manuscript to reach its completion. The last verse contains in words the year of completion again, *alf wa do sada u khamsa u khamsin* (A.H. 1255). Also, interestingly, just below this verse is written the figure 1895. This is possibly a record of the Vikrami Samvat (the year works out to A.D. 1838-39) in which Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Diwan Ajudhia Prasad's master, died and in which the manuscript may have been started. Diwan Ajudhia Prasad is not identified further, but he is undoubtedly the important noble who was held in much trust and esteem by the Maharaja of the Panjab. The place where the manuscript was written must almost certainly have been Lahore, the capital city, although the colophon does not mention this.

The *qissa* is a long, boxed series of tales and starts with the story of the 'King of Rum', Azad Bakht, whose heart has 'turned away from the world', and who leaves his kingdom to chance upon some saintly characters, the four *dervishes* of the title sitting in conversation. Each of them narrates a long, complex tale, as the king listens in secret. The tales are full of strange happenings, mystery and magic and intensely human situations, all commingling in them. But running through them are moral, instructional themes. There are statements on the nature of kingship, on the need for maintaining order and justice within a king's domains, and the like. One is tempted to believe that in commissioning this manuscript, Diwan Ajudhia Prasad was somehow motivated by thoughts of recalling what good government and kingship was, placed as he was in the turbulent, chaotic times that followed the death of the great Maharaja. Stories of *divs* and *paris,* of infidelity and treachery, of men being tortured and women cleaven, of mysterious happenings in the night and *jogis* wandering around with magically endowed bulls, of rulers given to offering homage to pet dogs, may not, one imagines, have been of much intrest ordinarily to the Diwan. But what could be extracted from these tales by him and those in his company with whom he may have shared the illustrated manuscript, may well have held meaning.

The work is profusely illustrated, sometimes in dense sequence. The tales are placed in distant lands like Turkey and China which the painter could not have seen himself. He, then, transfers the events to the land of his own experience, the Panjab or Kashmir, taking care at the same time to bring in characters and costumes that appear to be exotic and, thus, vaguely referring to the lands to which the tales in the original are related. One sees, thus, merchants and travellers, jewellers and traders, wearing what could pass off as central or western Asian dresses. But even in the rendering of these the painter's own observation of the characters around himself in Lahore, or elsewhere in Panjab and Kashmir, is clearly drawn upon. While some figures remind one of the great dignitaries at the Maharaja's court at Lahore, like Raja Dhian Singh or Diwan Dina Nath, there are others who wear large fluffy turban, sport very Afghan-looking beards, dress in *qabas* and long boots, and appear generaly ill at ease in this environment. Merchants and traders of various kinds were obviously a common sight in Lahore as they were in Kashmir, and incorporating these types into the painted folios could not have been difficult for the painter. In general, the architectural settings, the layout of the bazaars, the appearance of the walled city from the outside, the

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details of some of the roofs and domes, seem clearly to relate to Lahore. Much other detail, in dresses, furnitures, floor coverings, utensils, thrones and cushioned seats, gardens with pavilions, shops in the bazars, all give visual form to the details of material culture that the text contains. Everything seems to centre upon life as observed.

The paintings appear, at first sight, to have little to do with Kashmir. It is only upon closer examination that one begins to see a certain fusion. In general, the single dominant strain in the style of the paintings seems to be Pahari; in fact one can narrow this down further and see the style of the family of the artist Sajnu of Kangra at work. Facial types, the treatment of clouds, water, tree forms, architectural detail, gestures, the rendering of groups of men in a crowd, seem to come from that source even though one can see that the work is of a relatively summary character and the execution not as careful and precise as a Sajnu family artist, painting regular sized miniatures in the hills, would have turned out. The second element in the paintings seems to be that of the Panjab plains where painters were active, having learnt a great deal from the Pahari painters who had moved to Lahore, Amritsar, Kapurthala and Patiala etc. after the political decline of the Rajput dynasties of the hills. The third strain, of interest to the present study, comes from the Afghan-Kashmiri style, practitioners of which were undoubtedly active throughout northern India in this period.

One has to strain a little to isolate Kashmiri elements in this group of paintings but they are clearly there. One sees these in the prominent reddish tint on the faces of merchant-like figures that one associates with manuscripts painted in the Afghan-Kashmiri style; the consistent use of a violet/mauve range of pigments, especially in the rendering of architectural and furnishing details, seems to derive from Kashmir. These colours were seldom used in such measure in Pahari or Panjab plains work. The illuminated opening pages, and the *sarlauh,* now unfortunately damaged, are undoubtedly Kashmiri and when one sees the walled city from the rampart of which mysteriously a wooden box is being lowered in the night, one sees clearly a structure that is based upon the celebrated shrine of Shah Hamadan in Srinagar. The wooden architecture and the peculiarly shaped central spire of that building does not belong to the plains and may be a Kashmiri painter's nostalgic way of inducting a well loved shrine of his own land into the painting.

It is difficult to guess at how the amalgam of styles that one sees in these paintings came about. One is tempted to suggest that the work is by a Kashmiri group of artists who quickly picked up the manner and the style that was in favour at the Lahore court, thus incorporating in their work elements of Pahari and Panjab plains work. But it is perhaps more likely that a Kashmiri painter may have been asked to collaborate with other painters from Lahore in working out these illustrations. If it was a group of itinerent Kashmiri scribes and illuminators who were given this commission of copying this text by Diwan Ajudhia Prashad, the painter in the group may have been assigned a relatively minor role when it came to painting, the Diwan bringing in other painters who may have earlier worked for him at Lahore.

M. 26. A SELECTION OF LOVE LYRICS
Coll: Victoria Memorial, Calcutta
Acc. No. C207

Folios : Exact number not known; light brown, Sialkoti paper; Pushto text in *naskh* characters, 11 lines to a page, within panels with gold, blue and red rules along the margins; miniatures occupy a full page, with text on facing page; *sarlauh* with elaborate floral work and double opening pages with text in two columns with interlinear gold ornamentation, and a narrow vertical band separating the columns; rectangular, horizontal panel

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with *unwan* containing the words: *bismillah al rahman al-rahim* in *naskh* characters; modern cloth covers; colophon dated A.H. 1276/A.D. 1859, with name of patron and scribe.

The manuscript is unusual, for it is listed as a 'Pushtoo work' in the records, and not many 'Pushtoo' works with Kashmiri style illustrations are known. The text, even though written in *naskh* characters, is not easy to read, the language being related to Persian though different, but it is interesting to notice that the colophon is in standard Persian in *naskh* characters and easily legible. The colophon begins with prayers to Allah to forgive the inadvertent errors of the scribe, in the approved manner. Seeking divine blessings for the writer, the scribe and the reader of the manuscript, it then proceeds to record precise information. According to it, the work which is not identified—possibly because it is a selection and not one text—was completed on the twelfth day of the month of *Zilkadah* of the year 1276, in 'Kashmir-i jannat nazir dil Pazir' (Kashmir, the part of Paradise, pleasing to the heart) 'in the hand of the lowly Abdul Aziz at the behest of the exalted of rank, Khan Muhammad Khan Yusufzai'. Then follow other formulaic statements concerning the work having been brought to completion successfully with the grace of God. There is no ambiguity about the statement concerning the place where the manuscript was completed, a circumstance that needs to be emphasized considering that some doubt could have been entertained about this being a Kashmiri work. The scribe does not identify himself any further than giving his name, but this is not unusual. One can assume that he hailed from Kashmir; the patron, however, judging from his name belongs to an Afghan tribal group, Yusufzai being easily associated with the north-west frontier province of Panjab or with Afghanistan. It is this which should explain the uncommon look of the manuscript which has a strong Kashmiri flavour but seems not to belong to the mainstream of Kashmiri painting. It is not unlikely that the scribe, Abdul Aziz, had no or little access to Pushto, and was carrying out the commission of copying from a Pushto manuscript at the asking of the Khan. The script was not alien to him, and thus the task may not have been difficult, but when it came to providing the colophon which, clearly, was composed for this copy, the scribe turned naturally to standard Persian.

One is sharply reminded of the coming together of the Kashmiri and Afghan styles of manuscript illustration Hermann Goetz had pointedly drawn attention to the existence of an 'Afghan-Kashmiri style' in which different strains were drawn upon. A certain number of manuscripts that turn up in public and private collections seem to answer to this description. Most of these happen to be in Persian. The present manuscript is in Pushto and therefore of uncommon interest. If the outstanding character of works in the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' style is that the quality of drawing and the conventions used in the articulation of figures is generally very 'Kashmiri' in appearance, but the colouring is different, this manuscript falls clearly in that category. It acquires a special interest, however, because of the statement in the colophon that it was painted in Kashmir.

The paintings are all captioned on the top borders in red ink, and have in general the character of illustrations that one finds so frequently in manuscripts of the *Diwan-i-Hafiz*, the *Khamsa* of *Nizami*, or the *Kulliyat* of Sadi. The subject of these paintings being taken from the same kind of poetry, mixing worldly love with mystical love, there is a strong visual connection between this manuscript and the routine manuscripts of the above named works. Almost exactly in the same fashion as the *Hafiz* manuscript in a private collection (M. 4). There are images of conversations between the poet and his beauteous beloved, garden parties with musicians accompanying singing or recitation, lovers approaching their beloveds seated on terraces or inside tents. There are no surprises in these paintings: the compositions are clear and sparse, the figures often separated out, the aspect of men and women much of the same kind that one finds in standard

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Kashmiri works, the architecture and canopies rendered in the same manner. The dresses of the women here, *pairahan* with a long slit at the neck, tight pyjamas, brief skull-cap and veil, are such as are commonly seen; there is also a woman's figure wearing *choli* and skirt reminscent of Pahari work. Men are generally dressed in long *qaba*-like coats and *choghas*, long boots and turbans. The turbans here tend to be heavy, reminiscent of the nineteenth century Afghani turbans, or those associated with *mullahs* and other learned men in Persian paintings.

In this regard the paintings look very familiar, but in colouring a clear departure is made from the usual Kashmiri work. The backgrounds here in general are a flat slate-grey, no bright oranges and blues and yellows being brought in. The costumes, the architectural features, are also subdued in colouring, and while there is a commonness of patterns, the colours have nothing of the brightness that Kashmiri works in general use. Some of the other features, too, make departures: the striped rugs, the excessive number of pegs that hold a tent in place, the shape of a tent, pyramidal and with a broad opening in the centre, the rough manner in which sweeping vertical lines define a carpeted terrace, all seem to move away in their own fashion, from Kashmir. A scene showing five horsemen, galloping on steeds, achieves a distinct feeling of movement. On this page, the figures cut across the borders, the rump of a horse here, a turban there.

Much happens in these illustrations which take off from verses that speak of the great lovers of Persian literature, Wamaq and Majnun and Farhad etc. The *sarlauh* is strongly Kashmiri in feeling and execution, the usual Persian style arabesques replaced by rich floral patterning, as in papier-mache work, while retaining the general aspect of standard *sarlauhs*.

M. 27. THE *DEVI MAHATMYA:*
Private Collection

Number of folios not known because of dispersal; 11.2 x 17.5 cm; light brown, glazed paper; Sanskrit text in Devanagari characters, lines to a page, within panels measuring 11 cm x 15 cm, with broad orange and black coloured rules at the margins; 28 paintings have survived, each occupying a full page facing the text and serving as a frontispiece to a chapter, with narrow bands of yellow and black and a floral band around three sides of the margins, with flower and stem motifs, as also broad plain orange coloured borders, with a thin white rule; no illuminated opening page has survived; no covers; no date or colophon.

The text seems to follow the standard version of the celebrated 700 verses, the *Durga Saptashati* of the *Markandeya Purana*. The manuscript having in part been dispersed, it is not possible to make out the full contents of the text, but judging from the essentially iconic character of the paintings, it would appear as if the early passages dealing with the ritual portions, like the *kilaka*, the *argala*, the *kavacha* etc., must have been included in the text. Like so many other sacred texts meant for recitation, the copy seems to have been well used: it bears thumb stains at points where the leaves were meant to be held for turning over.

The paintings are all essentially simple in execution, and iconic in character. While the text has graphic, flamboyant passages of narrative content, the painter seems to confine himself to presenting monumental images of the Goddess, mostly seen on tiger back, for meditating upon; never really alone, but flanked by two or three figures that she seems either to have subdued, or stand offering her homage and obeisance. In some of the leaves, we see demons threatening or demonstrating, but they do not affect her composure in the slightest; in other leaves she is challenged by a centaur like Mahishasura of smoky body and a Muslim-looking beard, or by a demon with a horse head who advances towards

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her; in others she stands triumphant upon a prostrate demon whom she has just slain; in still others she is adored by the greatest of the gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. In all these iconic representations, the painter seems to pick passages from the text to base his images upon. The paintings are numbered in white pigment on the orange border towards the left, but the precise *rupa* of the Goddess is not easy to identify in each painting. The painter however takes great care in showing her as possessed of different complexions, white, orange, red, smoke-grey, blue, ochre yellow, gold, etc. We also see her endowed with different sets of arms in her different aspects ranging from four to eighteen. Naturally, the objects she carries in her hands vary from painting to painting: Vaishnava, Shakta and Shaiva—looking *ayudhas* keep appearing in her different representations In the eighteen-armed aspect in which she is shown orange complexioned, she carries objects as diverse as a lotus, a mace, a discus, a trishul, a rosary, a conch-shell, a cup, a sword, a dagger, a piece of cloth, an axe, and a skull: undoubtedly, in this composite image, the painter seems to refer to the Goddess absorbing within herself the *shakti* of all the gods that approach her for saving them and the world from the threat of demonic forces, and endow her with their various weapons.

The paintings are generally rendered with the ground and the backgrounds in flat colours, the ground often red, and the background a flat muddy green that curves at the top, cutting across the rules on that margin. This feature is by no means peculiar to this manuscript, but it is somewhat hard to explain, unless of course the painter is suggesting something of the energy that spills beyond limits through this simple device. The colours of the ground and the background are sometimes varied, and at places, at the point where the ground and the background join, a narrow band, striped or river-like, is introduced as if to break the monotony in the representations.

When simple, direct images of the kind that figure in this manuscript, are encountered attention necessarily is diverted to several details that force themselves upon one's attention. One notices, for example, how devotee figures stand with hands held in adoration. These hands are not shown with palms joined but as half-cupped, joined together and held slightly open in front of the body, Muslim-fashion. One notices also how the painter, working swiftly or routinely as he was, seems to render features like hands and feet very summarily. The Goddess is possessed of an object like a conch-shell or a skull, but she does not really hold it: it seems to rest lightly upon her hand, fingers curled inwards and held almost like a fist. When a lotus flower is held in the hand, or is placed upon a throne for the Goddess to sit upon, the painter seems to have put in first a flat layer of pink pigment in circular or oval form and then proceeded to superimpose upon it, with lines drawn in purple, the outlines of petals. It is only upon close examination that one notices the simple quick method he seems to have followed. There are naturally indications of colours, thus, not staying within the contours that they are meant to be confined within, but in a routine manuscript like this, this must have passed muster. Again, when the lips of some of the figures, like the demons, are coloured, a rather carelessly applied simple horizontal red line marks them; the effect often is somewhat akin to that of poor colour registration in printing.

In this series of paintings, at places it is possible to notice second thoughts on the painter's part. Under the pigment that makes up the background, sometimes behind the head of the Goddess, in one case behind Vishnu's head, one discerns a faint outline of a nimbus. This must have been drawn initially, but when the page was painted, it was eliminated apparently upon second thought. What led to this decision which caused a difference to come about between the drawn image and the painted image, is not easy to guess at. Likewise, a puzzling circumstance is that the Goddess is most often shown bare in the upper part of the body but without any indication of her femininity. No suggestion of breasts is discernible. In a few paintings she wears a brief *choli*, but even here seems to be a conscious

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avoidance of contours that would suggest her breasts under the *choli*. This is quite in keeping with the general reluctance of the Kashmiri painters to come to terms with the female body, but the complete elimination of the breasts even when the body is bare is a circumstance clearly to be remarked upon.

The manuscript is evidently of a routine kind and of a late date. There is at places an acid-green chemical colour that is used, suggesting that the work could well belong to the end of the nineteenth century. But even in as late and routine a work as this, there are occasional, startling flashes of creativity, as in the folio where the sage Markandeya offers libations. With king Suratha seated by his side, the Goddess emerges from the fire. The treatment of the fire here, spiky, red and orange flames licking the air, thin streams of smoke emanating, is nothing short of brilliant. It acquires tremendous presence, truly the element that purifies and carries the offerings of mortals to the world of the gods.

M. 28. THE AVATARA CHARITAVALI
Coll: Research Department, J&K, Srinagar. (attached to the department of Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University)
Acc. No. 889

Folios 10; 20.5x13 cms, white, possibly machine-made paper, with thicker borders of hand-made paper; no text except for brief inscriptions at bottom of each folio; principal part of page consisting of a painting with the entire ground in floral designs in paper cut; thick rules in ochre red and blue, and a fine rule in white, orange-red borders; each folio inserted in a larger sheet with slits at four corners, as if in a photo-album, sheets kept in cardboard-like covers with printed paper in diagonal stripes in red and white; each folio with name of painter and date.

This group of ten paintings needs more to be seen as a set of miniatures perhaps than a manuscript: what keeps them together is the album-like format in which they are kept: corners of paintings tucked inside corner slits of larger sheets. At the same time what gives the paintings something of the aspect of a 'manuscript' is the inscription at the bottom of each leaf. The inscriptions are skilfully integrated in the paper cut design of the sheet so that if the scripted words had been left of the same colour as the rest of the sheet, plain white, it would have been difficult to make out that they were calligraphed inscriptions rather than part of the herbal/floral work. As it now stands, all the inscriptions are lightly coloured, in blue, yellow or red ink which makes them stand out.

The work is in the hand of Devi Kaul, evidently a Kashmiri pandit, who describes himself variously in these inscriptions as 'Devi Baghat (*sic*)' [*bhakta*] or 'Devi Kaul Kashmiri', at one place even simply as 'Devi Sahai'. The full name of the painter, one can conclude, was Devi Sahai Kaul, who was of Kashmiri extraction, and was possibly a devotee of the Goddess and thus used a pun when he described himself as 'Devi Bhagat' or 'Bhakta', 'a devotee of the Goddess'. Interestingly each of the leaves bears a date in the Christian calendar, the years ranging from A.D. 1897 to as late as 1927. In addition, the words 'Devi Kaul' used refer to these works being in his hand, the expressions being '*raqima-i niyaz*' or '*az-dast-i*' in Persian, leaving no doubt that the paintings are his work. It is not only for the paper cut patterns that he is responsible, in other words, but for the painting.

The work is, in its general aspect, entirely unusual, this kind of combination of painting and paper cut being rarely seen. It would seem as if Devi Kaul proceeded first by painting the picture on a whole sheet, and then began to cut away the unpainted areas behind the figures with a blade or similar instrument. The work is exceedingly painstaking, for the designs cut in the paper and left uncoloured are delicate like traceries, plants, flowers, and buds all intermingling. Evidently the sheets were never meant to be used as stencils like the work that

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one sees in Mathura or Nathdwara at about this time. These sheets were meant to stand on their own, as they now are: paintings surrounded by a garden-like spread. Each of the leaves has, towards the top, an arch design, scalloped and pointed, the spandrels being of solid paper, each differently coloured and ornamented in intricate patterns.

Even though the artist describes himself as a devotee of the Goddess, the themes are all Vaishnava, the ten incarnations of Vishnu being painted in a sequence, from Matsya to Kalki: this may well have been in response to a patron's wish. Devi Kaul seems to have been perfectly familiar with the iconography of each *avatara* and the setting, so that there is nothing unusual about the renderings. Thus, as always, Varaha emerges lifting the earth on his tusks, Narasimha emerges from a split column to tear Hiranyakashipu apart, Rama takes on the ten headed Ravana in battle, the Buddha is seated inside a shrine attended upon by devotees.

The paintings are undoubtedly Kashmiri in style but, curiously, this is not the first impression that one gets. One realises that the first impression owes itself to the backgrounds having been done away with, and those colours that one associates with Kashmiri work, defining planes, occupying the whole background—yellows, oranges, mauves, greens and blues—not being there. At first sight—also because the figures are a trifle taller than usually seen in Kashmiri painting—the aspect they seem to carry is of Pahari work. A strong influence from Kangra or Jammu may well have been at work, but there is little doubt about the Kashmiri affiliation of Devi Kaul's work. In the rendering of the figures one sees the same approach; in the colouring and the details, a clear connection is established with Kashmiri manuscripts of the earlier part of the nineteenth century. The earth that Varaha lifts on his tusks is made up of the same scalloped rocks in purple and pink that one is familiar with; the lotuses that figures carry are full and large and purple; the wall-less pavilion in which the Buddha is seated has the same swing-like appearance; Kalki stands next to the same winged horse. There are minor changes, of course, and the work is finely detailed as in the patterns of dresses, or in general colouring. But no mistake can be made in the identification of Devi Kaul's stylistic affiliations. Some mannerisms may be attributed to him and his hand, some details may have been of his own invention; the figures are full of greater movement, the eyes are elongated as in Kangra work, and a clear line is placed up above the upper eyelid, picking up prominently the curve of the eyeball for example. The work appears thus to be convention-based on the one hand and open to influences on the other. What results from this is pleasing in appearance, and touched by a conviction that does not usually inform stereotyped renderings of the ten *avataras*.

The title under which the paintings of this set are grouped, *Avatara Charitavali*, seems to have been given not by the artist himself but by the person accessioning these works in the Research Department.

M. 29. AN ANTHOLOGY OF VAISHNAVA TEXTS
Coll: Von Portheim Stiftung, Heidelberg

Number of folios unknown; 25 cm x 17.5 cm; light brown Sialkoti paper; Persian text in *nastaliq* character, within text panels; black and red rules along the margins; number of paintings not known, each painting within a panel often with text above or below; no *sarlauh* that has survived; no covers; no date or colophon.

This manuscript which may well come from the first decade of this century, could be seen as representing what is virtually the last phase of manuscript writing in Kashmir. The printing press had arrived by this time; lithographed copies of works produced in large numbers were commonly available. But some

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work in terms of writing whole texts by hand, and illustrating them with paintings in full colour, apparently continued to be done. Since books did not yet have illustrations in colour, illustrated manuscripts must have continued to hold a measure of interest. At the same time, printed books at relatively small prices having gained currency, the scribes and painters must have had to strive hard to be able to compete with them. A part of their work must have been lightened by ready-made pigments and chemical colours becoming available. Out of all this was born perhaps what can be legitimately called *bazaar* paintings in the Kashmiri style. This manuscript is clearly of that category. It is immediately noticeable that the range and the quality of colours in the manuscript has changed from earlier times. The greens that one sees here are derived neither from mineral nor vegetable sources, but from chemicals. A certain sharpness, sought to be dulled somewhat with effort, belongs to the green expanses in the backgrounds of some of the paintings. The rich purples and mauves of the earlier paintings have yielded to sharper colours in the same range; a dark purplish colour comes in. The reds and scarlets have much brightness, but not the same saturation as before. At the same time, the brush work is now coarse, and the detailing of figures and objects is very summary. One notices this, in particular, in the rendering of water, where broad, horizontal strokes in white, painted parallel to each other, serve for waves. Likewise, in the rendering of architecture, fine details are omitted, and thick brush work serves to define outlines etc. In this manuscript, figures tend also to be shorter and a little fleshier.

What comes as a pleasant surprise in these paintings is the ability of the artist to continue to innovate and achieve bold, startling patterns. There are compositions that appear as if they have been thought out afresh, with some reference to the work of the past but so much varied and modified as to acquire a feeling of newness. Thus, when we see the episode of Muchukunda sleeping inside a cave, with Vishnu luring a pursuing demon inside it for him to be burnt by the fiery gaze of Muchukunda when rudely awakened, the scene is set in the midst of roughly painted purple rocks; the inside of the 'cave' is painted a dark grey, in a circular patch, to distinguish it from the surrounding rock. Here all the action takes place: Muchukunda is seen sleeping, a booted demon king treads on him and is presumably destroyed (this is not rendered however); and then Muchukunda prays to Vishnu seated at the extreme left. In order to clarify that this is the inside of the cave, the painter places, completely arbitrarily, a domical, elongated opening, essentially an unpainted surface, in the middle of the cave, suggesting with wonderful naivete that it is through this opening that the cave has been entered by everyone concerned. Again, Krishna is shown with a group of cows whom he has presumably taken out to graze while the elders of the village converse with other: at the top of the painting, the painter brings in a whole row of seven cows all set against each other, facing in the same direction, slightly superimposed, and arranged vertically along the page like a phalanx, while Krishna holds the ropes that pass through their nostrils all together in his hands. In the scene of Krishna and Balrama arriving at the court of Kansa, two aubergine coloured elephants are brought in instead of the usual Kuvalyapida; Krishna, watched by demons and gopas, lassoes the two elephants from their trunks and seemingly throws them up in the air, streams of blood flowing from wounds inflicted upon them by him and Balarama. When Ravana, in demonic form, shows up before Sita's hut for abducting her, the hut is eliminated, the line drawn by Lakshmana around Sita for protecting her turns into a narrow stream with fish and lotuses in it, which the demon king is about to cross. It is in this fashion that the painter proceeds, packing his compositions densely, innovating, moving with that enviable freedom that the folk artist avails himself of.

There are passages here that one does not see visualized often in Kashmiri work. The vision of Narada as he comes to Dwarika and finds Krishna in chamber after chamber, each time engaged in a different activity, eating, playing *chaupar*,

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issuing instructions, dallying with his consort. All this is rendered in a crowded page. The outer wall of Krishna's fortress palace is defined by neatly arranged bluish bricks, and the sea at Dwarika by a curved segment of water, at the bottom, with fish and lotuses. One also sees the rarely rendered episode of sage Bhrigu kicking Vishnu on his chest with his foot while the great God rests on his serpent couch, the Shesha, with Lakshmi by his side. These worlds are explored by the painter in his own fashion: new devices, however rough, are tried out; old conventions for sea and sky, land and trees, are drastically modified. This is all done when the tradition of painting was beginning to wither and bazaar work began to come in to represent the end of a long succession of manuscripts written and painted in a given fashion for so long.

M. 30. A HOROSCOPE SCROLL
17.5 cm x 17.5 cm.
Private Collection

One continuous scroll with joined pieces of paper in fragments now; width 16 cm; cream-coloured machine-made paper; single line panels of text in Sharada characters placed horizontally throughout the scroll; text panels and paintings contained within narrow bands of grey, yellowish brown, and grey, with thin rules at the margins, broad borders with thin double-rules in red at the edges; paintings contained within the same frames as the text, above, below and at the sides; no illumination at the top; no covers, being kept in scroll form; no date on the surviving portion.

The text part of this horoscope-scroll, *janma patri* or *kundali* as it is called, is now lost and thus information about the name of the person whose horoscope it is and the date of its casting are no longer available. As is common with the usual horoscopes, there must at one time have been a long text, also in Sharada characters in which the captions of the paintings are now written, containing elaborate calculations, making prdictions, prescribing *japas* and other rituals for the avoidance of ill-effects of unfavourable conjunctions of planets, etc. The painted portion, which is usually at the very top of horoscopes, now also not fully preserved, seems to have been removed from the horoscope and sold by a dealer. It is not possible to tell how many painted panels there were at one time; only seven of them have survived.

Horoscopes were one of the kinds of 'manuscripts' on which painting was done since a very long time. The nature of horoscopic illustration being iconic and therefore resistant to change, they continued to be parts of daily lives, at least of the priestly community and the Kashmiri Hindus in general. They were also almost always painted by the priests themselves for their clients or *yajamanas*. The quality of work in them tended to range from the very sophisticated to the very routine and prosaic. Since the images were for the most part constant, and tended to be repeated from horoscope to horoscope, this was one of the first categories of art in Kashmir that went into decline following the introduction of the printing press. Examples first of lithographed and hand-coloured *janam-patris* or '*tipras*' as they were often called, and, a little later, of colour-printed *tipra*-images from the twentieth century have survived. As in the case of hand-written, illustrated manuscripts of poetic or sacred texts, the tradition of hand-painted *tipras* was slow in dying, the affluent still preferring to possess individualized, hand-painted horoscopes. However it was not long before they went into complete decline, finally dying out in this century.

The *tipras* that continued to be painted even after the introduction of reprographic processes did, however, generally belong to the 'bazaar' type of work. The workmanship was often coarse and summary; the colours used were those easy to obtain, ready-made and chemicals-based; the images were

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abbreviated still further. A great deal of acid-green is seen used in these, as also other colours that came from chemical sources. The traditional oranges, purples, mauves and pinks, saturated and rich, were quickly replaced. The seven segments of this horoscope that have survived demonstrate this amply. The greens apart—these are obviously of chemical extraction—even the scarlet reds and blues used in the backgrounds have a strong 'aniline' look to them.

The images, predictably, are those of the planets personified, or of deities invoked on the client's behalf. The topmost part of the scroll seems to have contained the image of Durga on a tiger, very hastily drawn, especially when one sees the tiger and the Goddess's skirt. Coarse floral finials in dulled colours appear at the top. These undoubtedly served for the beginning of a scroll. There are images of Rahu, Chandra, Brihaspati, Mangala and Shani among those that have survived. Each planetary deity is shown riding a vehicle, a bull, a buffalo,a tiger, a horse or a deer. Rahu, of course, consists simply of a decapitated head, resting on a low, hexagonal stool or *chauki*, blue-complexioned, with a snake around his neck.

The figures are all summary in drawing, the hands of the deities, the legs and hooves of their animal-mounts, specially showing this. At places there are indications of ground in the form of heaps of nearly-abstract rocks or mountain-peaks. Ornamentation generally takes the form of large 'gold' spots, closely placed together—they are made either of very poor quality gold or of brass and silver. These spots, one notices, were to become prominent in later, lithographed versions of the deities that appear in horoscopes. All the figures, even though meant to be seen as being in the open or in a landscape, are placed under a schematic arch that routinely appears on all panels. All figures are not equally poorly drawn; Brihaspati on his elephant mount with a cowering mahout, for instance, is not convincing as a form, but Mangala seen riding a leopard, or the figure atop a *hamsa,* make a much better impression.

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Chapter Six

KASHMIRI PAINTINGS: A Selection

P. 1. THE GODDESS ENTHRONED
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of prayer texts in Sharada script
12.4 cm x 7.4 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 91.1/351

The painting has all the signs of being the work of an amateur painter, who is aware of the tradition of painting in Kashmir, but has not been trained in it. What is painted here is the goddess, five-headed, ten-armed, seated cross-legged on a lotus which is placed upon a hexagonal throne. Considering the number of weapons that the goddess carries in her hands, *trishula, ankusha,* discus, among them, as also a severed head, the goddess is meant to be invoked as the great power of destruction, as much as of munificence. The rendering of the five heads—all differently coloured, three of them in a vertical column and two painted laterally—show familiarity with the standard way of rendering multiple heads in the Kashmiri tradition. One notices, however, that what was meant to be a head painted in gold, the central one attached to the neck proper, is only slightly darkened for virtually no gold is used in the painting save for little dots.

All the heads bear the third eye on the forehead. But not all of them wear the same expression, which is unusual. The bluish-back head on the extreme right has a touch of anger in the expression; the head at the top of the pile wears a worried scowl; there is curiosity and peace on the other heads. One gets the sense of the painter having applied his mind to interpreting the different heads which could possibly signify, if not fully convey, all the moods and the aspects of the goddess. The elongated nimbus that spreads behind the five heads is now somewhat smoked and dark. The two hands that the goddess brings in front hold no objects; the lower left hand, held against the chest, makes a tentative gesture of granting the boon of fearlessness to the devotee. Once again, one gets the feeling that the painter is vaguely aware that such *mudras* or *hastas* are rendered, but is not at home with them.

The colouring of the page, apart from that seen in the clothing worn by the goddess and the faces—the greyish background, the stripes of black that mark the sky at the top, the little tufts of grass that are placed below and behind the throne to mark the ground—deserve to be noticed. All this is very different from what one ordinarily sees. At the bottom there are two rows of stylised trees, full-crowned and cypress-like. Again, the painter seems to have picked these up from some professional painter's work that he may have seen. The laying of the pigments however seems to have been problematic for him, for one sees whole chunks of pigment having fallen off as if being too thickly applied. This cake-like pigment possibly was unable to withstand the wear and tear that a painting inside a frequently used manuscript entailed.

While the drawing is coarse in general, and the colouring somewhat unsure; the painting succeeds somehow in communicating faith and emotion. The non-professional painter, a pandit perhaps who might also have been responsible for the text in Sharada, appears to have worked with imprecision but at least with conviction.

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P. 2. A CELEBRATION OF VISHNU-KRISHNA
Fragment of a painted *torana*
51.5 cm x 34 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar
Acc. No.: 2982-2983
Unpublished

This segment forms part of a large ambitious *torana* consisting apparently of two vertical panels topped by a horizontal one which are arranged in the form of a door-way and meant to adorn one, consisting essentially of three different parts. Towards the left is an arrangement of 12 rectangular panels showing the vision of the sage Narada in Dwaraka in the middle with a large, monumental looking image of Vishnu, four-armed, approached and adored by a group of kingly figures, standing below the throne; and under a similar arch, at right, in a circular pattern, the *Rasa-lila* of Krishna with the gopis, watched from the heavens by the divine beings, among them Shiva. The key appears to be taken from the horizontal panel at the top which are clearly parts of a general scheme in which, on the uprights, the ten *avataras* of Vishnu are painted, starting at the bottom on the panel at left with the *Matsya Avatara* and ending, on the right panel at the bottom with *Kalki*, the tenth *avatara*. One has to visualise and reconstruct, for the *torana* is no longer in its original shape, and consists of parts with some panels missing. It is likely that the central image in this sequence was the central image of the whole *torana*, that of Vishnu Two Krishna-Lila episodes on either side of the central image are possibly the painter's way of suggesting the unfathomable nature of Vishnu's *lila*. As Narada approaches the city of Dwaraka for paying homage to Krishna, he goes from chamber to chamber, finding in each Krishna with a queen, engaged each time in a different activity, playing a game of dice, eating, having the soles of his feet massaged while in conversation each time with a different queen. The episode from the *Bhagavata* is much celebrated and is used to emphasize how impossible it is to fully comprehend what Krishna's *lila* is like. The *Rasa lila*, the circular dance of Krishna with the *gopis*, Krishna having multiplied himself and placed himself at each step betwen two gopis, is yet another celebrated episode. The beautiful passages in the *Bhagavata* dealing with Rasa-lila underscore the wonder and the beauty of it. It is this wonder, and adoration, that one sees on the faces of the five figures standing with folded hands below the throne on which is the figure of Vishnu, blue-bodied, yellow robed, crowned and nimbate, carrying his cognitive emblems, the *shankh*, the *chakra*, the *gada* and the *padma* in his four hands.

Like the rest of the panels of this *torana*, representing the ten *avataras* of Vishnu, this segment is charged with great feeling, visible partly on the faces and in the gestures of the devotees' group. The representations are shot through with a sense of conviction, and the painter seems to lavish a great deal of attention on every single detail. There is possibly no other work from Kashmir of this period in which, for instance, the colours are as easily handled, the ornamentation of the architecture of thrones and nimbuses is as precise and colourful as seen here: departing from the usual, simplified pattern of ornamentation on dresses in the form of gold spots or, at places, gold stripes against crimson or blue etc. Very elaborate, elegant patterns appear on the dresses, reminding one strongly of those magnificent *jamas* and *saris* that one sees in Pahari paintings of late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. The colours used are a trifle more subdued than usual, even though time's ravage is quickly recognisable; the backgrounds consist of flat-reds, the strips of sky of inky blues etc. At the same time, the drawing in this segment as in the rest of the *torana*, is for more relaxed and convincing than in the general lot of Kashmiri miniatures and painted folios in illustrated manuscripts. The ease of standing, the turns and twists of the body, the gestures, are all fluid, and light. One sees this, for instance, in the small panel

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in which Krishna makes advances towards one of his queens, or when he stands to play upon the flute in another panel. Even when the two priests flanking the image of the Buddha as the ninth avatara of Vishnu are seen, there is a remarkable sense of ease one notices in the stances of the priests. In this respect, and in so many others, this must rank as one of the most accomplished of Kashmiri works in the miniature tradition.

The painter clearly shows an awareness of the Pahari tradition of painting, but remains resolutely linked to Kashimir. One sees this not only in the colour scheme, as before, but in the figures. The group of devotees below the throne of Vishnu may look vaguely Pahari, but Krishna's many queens in the chambers in which they are placed, are all recognisably Kashmiri: the women dressed in the local fashion, small skull caps on the head, jewellery and ornaments in the hair or on the ears, the heavy lock of hair ending in a thick curl at, the temple, and so on.

The work is dateable in the middle of the eighteenth century, making it among the earliest 'miniatures' in the Kashmiri tradition that have survived. There is a one-line inscription in the Sharada script in the 'first' panel showing the *Matsya avatara*. The text is written against the surface of the water between the figure of Vishnu and the demon Shankhasura whom he battles. Unfortunately, it is now too faint to be clearly legible, but the name of Vishnu in the middle can be read clearly as also the opening word 'Om'.

P. 3. BRAHMA SEATED ON A HAMSA
Folio from an illustrated anthology of prayer texts in Sharada characters
6.1 cm x 10 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 91.1/349
Unpublished.

The painting, occurring as it does among many others in a manuscript of an anthology of sacred texts meant for prayer and recitation, is almost certainly not the work of a professional painter: a Pandit or a devoted householder who had scripted the text was possibly responsible for it. It shows a clear awareness of Kashmiri painting as done by professional craftsmen, and in fact even aims at approximating to it. But there is so much of coarseness of execution and such little attention paid to detail that at several points the connection with professional work appears to wear thin.

Brahma is rendered in the Kashmiri convention, very youthful, the four heads arranged in groups of two facing in opposite directions. He is not here the hoary old figure, the *pitamaha*, known from other styles of painting, especially the Pahari. Where this convention is taken from, what iconographic source it draws upon, is not clear. But this youthful form of Brahma figures consistently in Kashmiri painting, regardless of whether the work is by professionals or gifted amateurs, by Muslim or Hindu craftsmen.

Brahma is shown seated on a lotus, placed in turn upon the back of a stylised *hamsa* whose body is extended so that it can be accommodated on the large lotus. The manner in which the legs and feet of the bird are treated almost suggest as if it were bending under the burden. What is in the deity's hands is the most perfunctory rendering of some texts, apparently the *vedas* as is established by the iconography. The folios as rendered here are straight, flat oblongs of white with pseudo-writing on them in the form of black curlicues. The figure is placed on a terrace with a brief hint of a balustrade at the back. The background is coloured a deep green against which the nimbus behind Brahma's heads is barely visible. The application of colours is exceedingly casual, the small scale of the paintings being at least partially responsible for this. The red on the palms of the hands thus is no more than a scalloped smudge; the red applied on the lips goes outside of their outline, as if poorly registered in printing. The little dots of white

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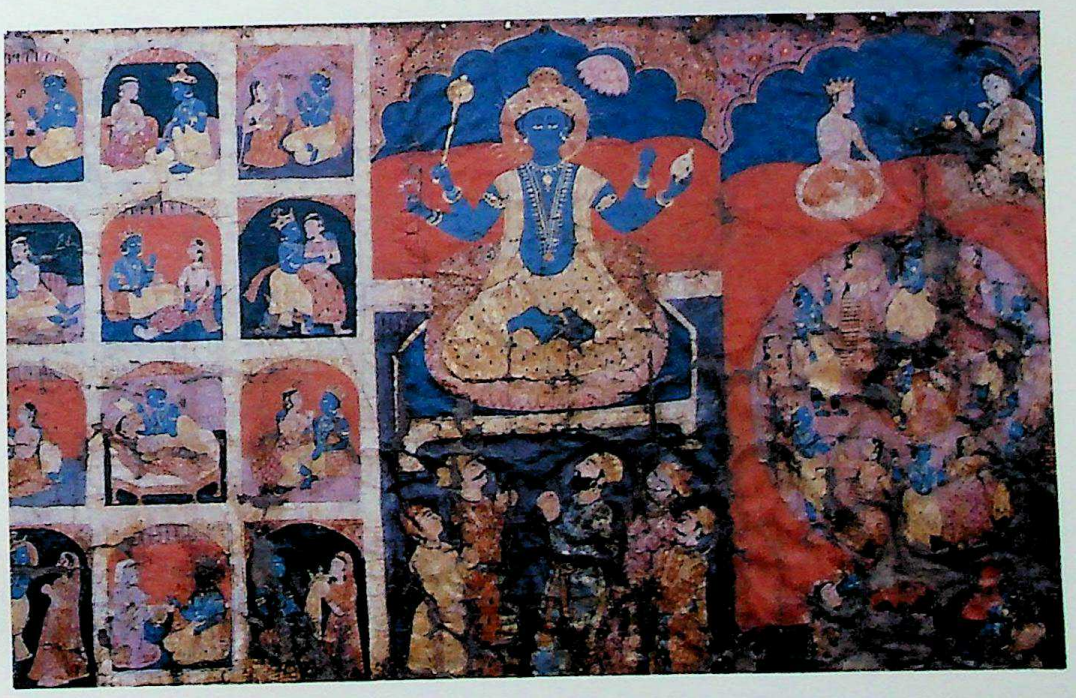
P1. The Goddess enthroned: folio from a ms. of prayer texts in Sharada script.



P2. A Celebration of Vishnu-Krishna: fragment of a painted *torana*.

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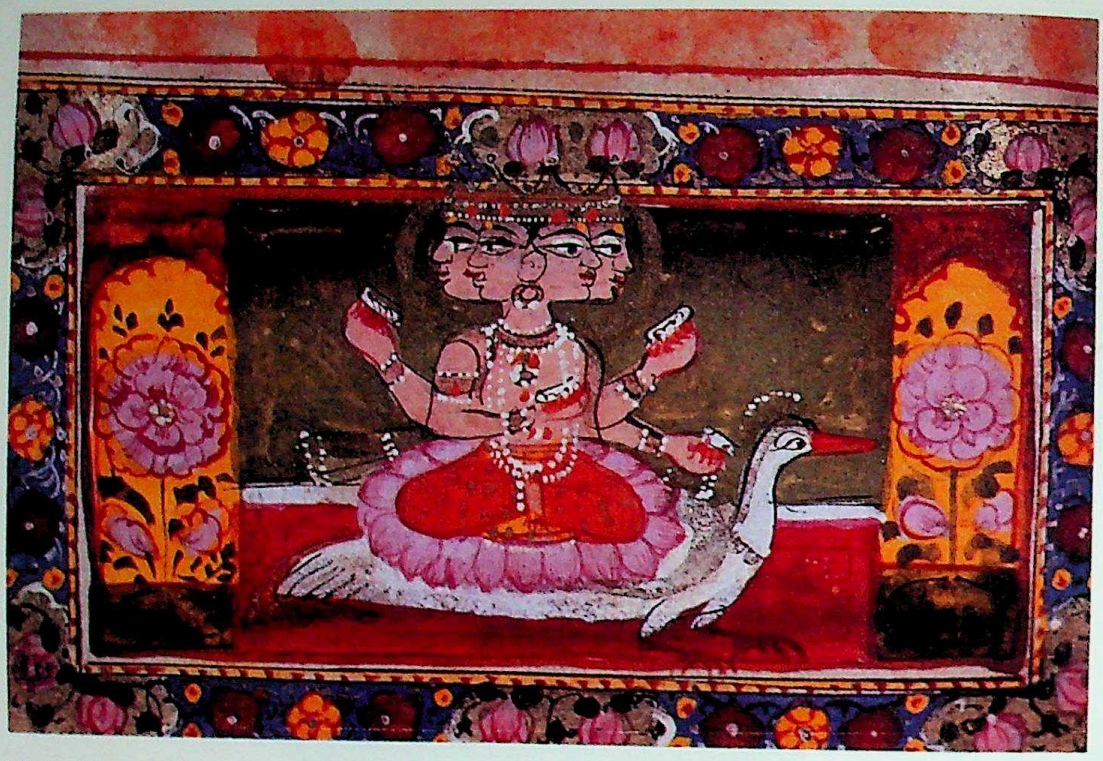
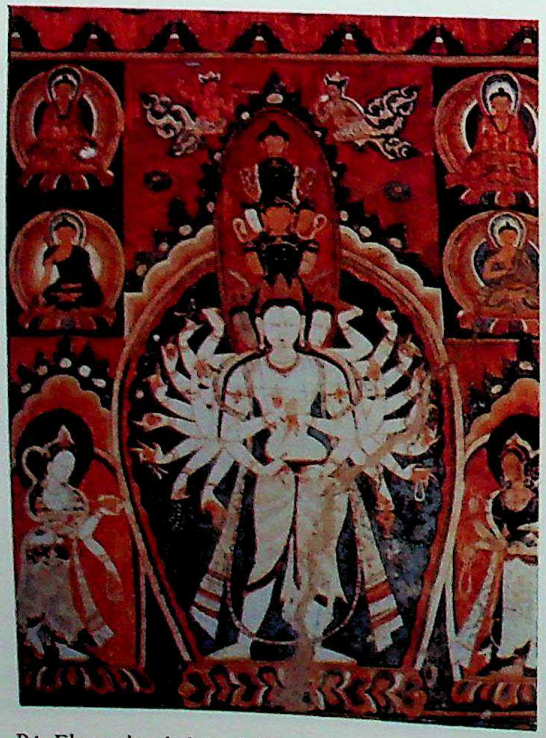


P3. Brahma seated on a hamsa: folio from an anthology of prayer texts in Sharada script.



P4. Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara: mural panel from the Sumtek.

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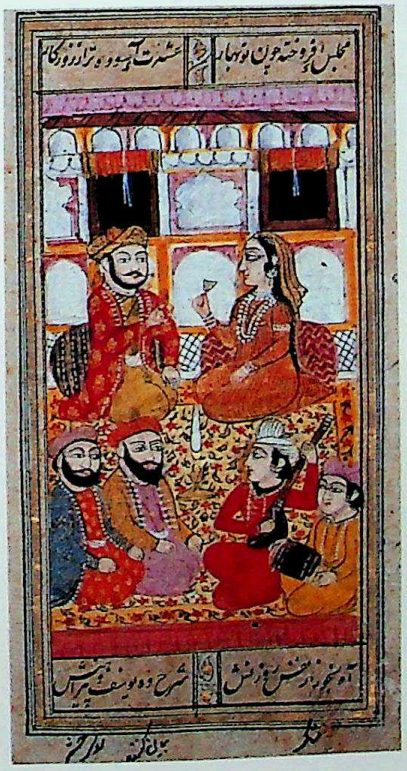
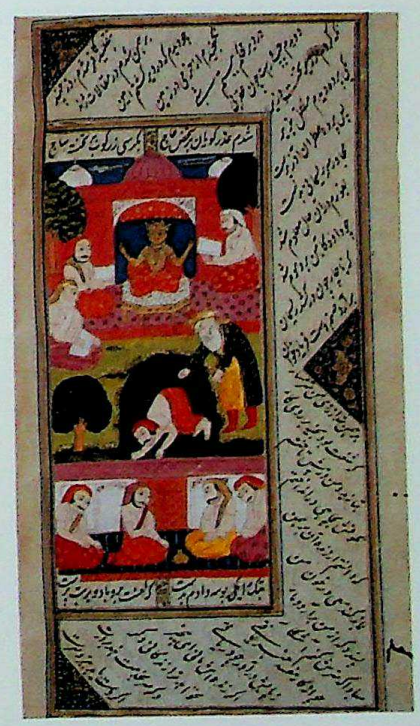
P5. Miraj: Folio from a ms. of the *Diwan* of Hafiz.

P6. Hafiz in conversation with his loved one: folio from a ms. of the *Diwan* of Hafiz.



P7. Lovers enjoying wine and music: folio from a ms. of the *Khamsa* of Nizami.



P8. Sadi in a temple: folio from a ms. of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi.

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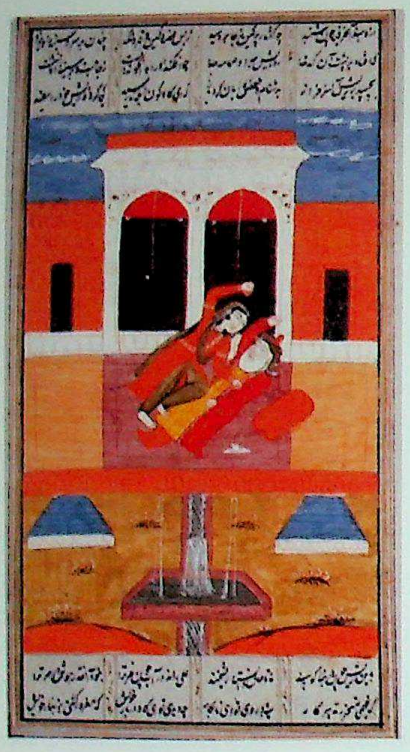
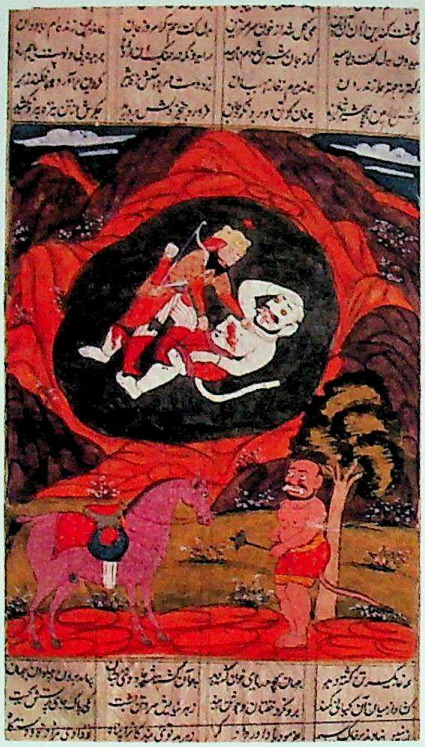


P9. A maiden belabours an old man: folio from a ms. of the *Hamla-i-Haidari*.



P10. Rustam slays the White Div: folio from a ms. of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi.

P11. Painted book cover: belonging to a ms. of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi.

P12. A *Sarlauh*: from a ms. of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi.

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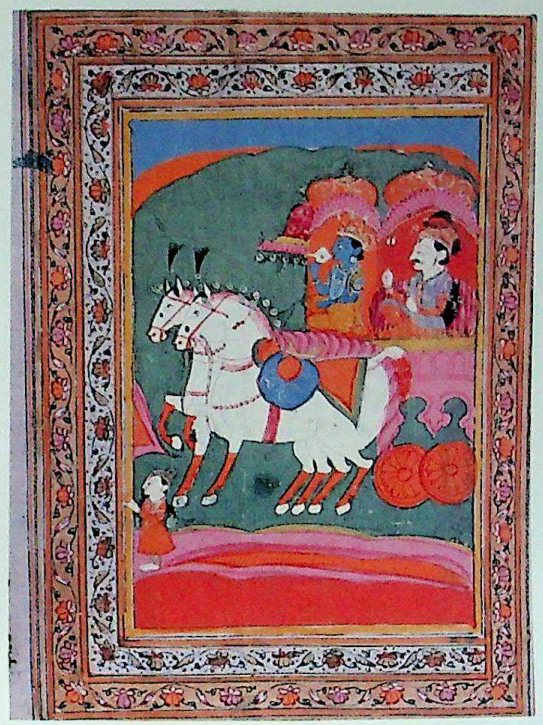
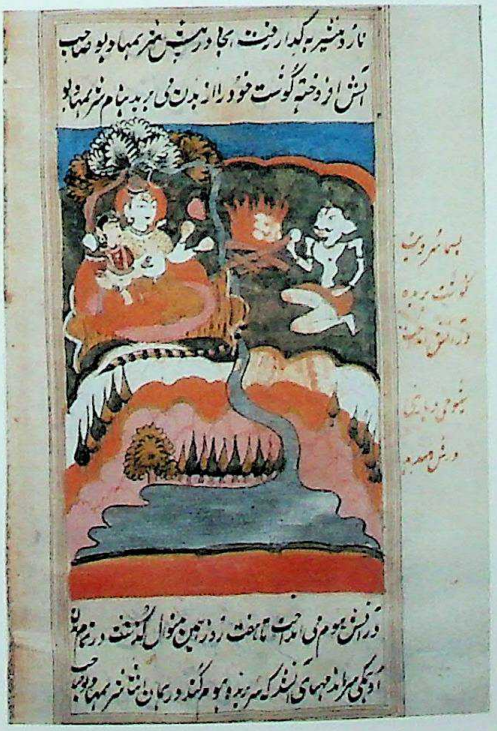
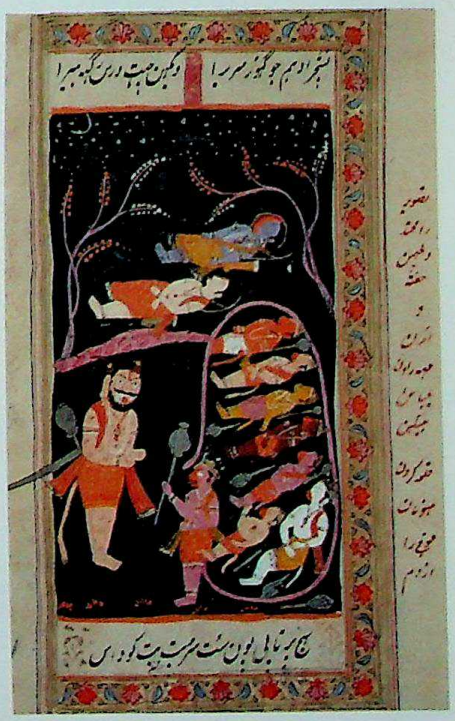


P13. Krishna and Arjuna in the Chariot: folio from a ms. of the *Bhagavadgita*.

P14. Arjuna's Vision: the Cosmic Form of Vishnu-Krishna: folio from a ms. of the *Bhagavadgita*.



P15. Bhasmasura seeks the blessings of Shiva: folio from a ms. of the *Bhagavata Purana*.



P16. Hanumana guards his army at night: folio from a ms. of the *Ramacharitamanasa* of Tulsidasa.

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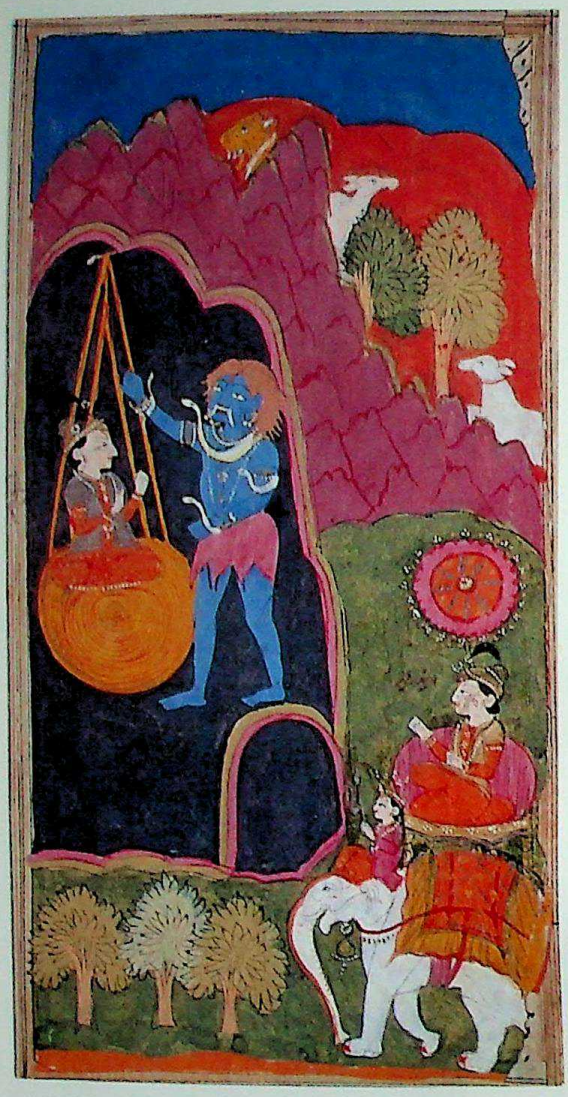
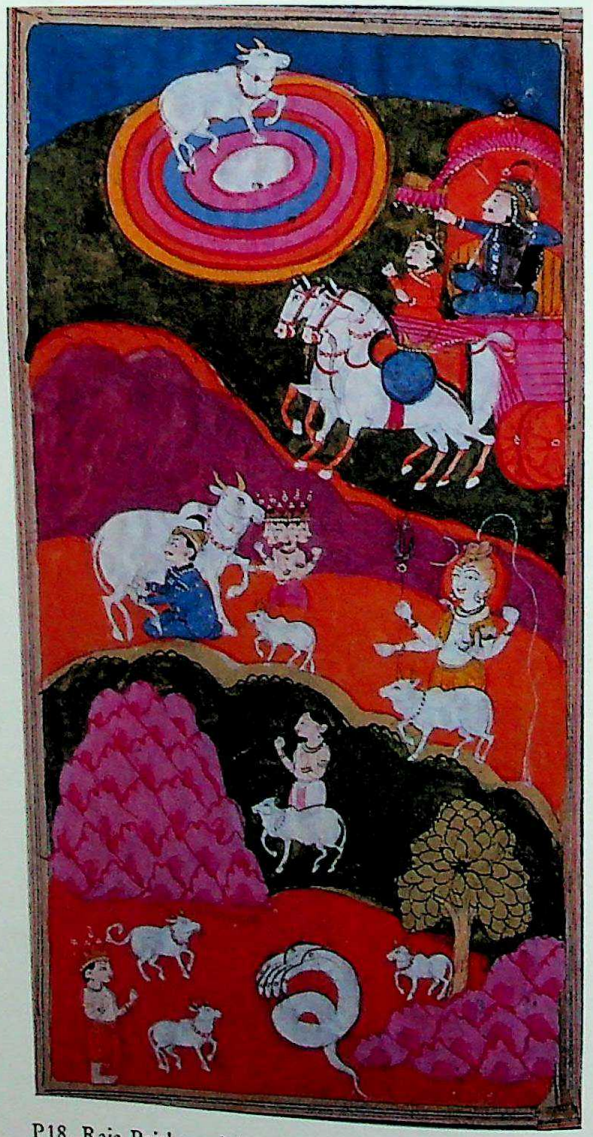


P17. A demon approaches a king inside a cave: folio from an anthology of sacred texts.



P18. Raja Prithu subdues the Earth-cow: folio from an anthology of sacred texts.

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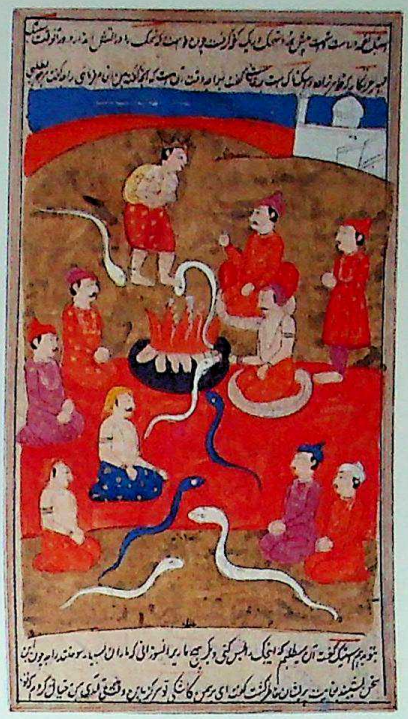

P19. The snake sacrifice of Raja Parikshit: folio from a ms. of the *Mahabharata*.

P20. The Goddess and Shiva receive homage.

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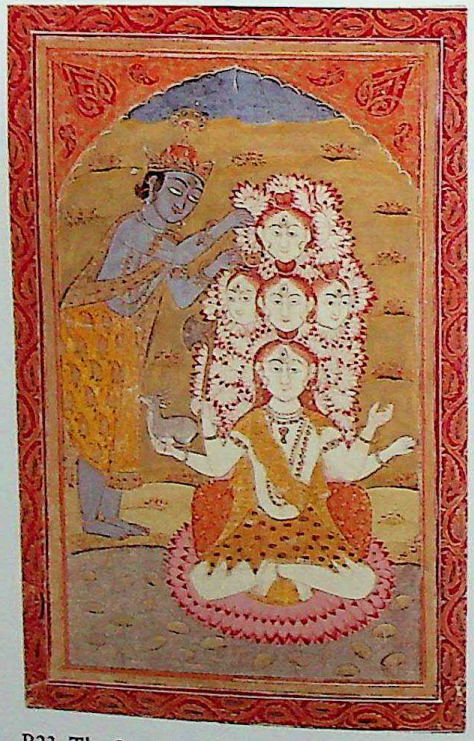
P21. The Adoration of Sadashiva.

P22. Goddess in the cremation ground.



P23. The Svachhanda-bhairava form of Shiva.

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that make up the pearl necklaces, bracelets and armlets of Brahma are again coarsely applied.

There is, however, a clear attempt at giving a sumptuous air to the page. The format of the frame being rather long, going well beyond the figure of Brahma on the *hamsa*; the painter provides two vertical panels inside the frame, each with a boldly rendered floral pattern against a yellow ground. Around the inner painted area is a broad margin, once again with bold flowers and creepers in deep red, orange, pink, green, and an occasional dash of gold. The floral patterning is a take-off on the kind of work that Kashmiri designers on papier-mache, and illuminators in the manuscript tradition, rendered. The brush-work, the application of pigments, is noticeabley coarse, a certain thickness and lack of glaze marking the pigments in particular.

The top, uncoloured border, is interestingly marked with smudges in saffron or ochre. The same marks appear on all the painted folios of this manuscripts. These are undoubtedly marks made by the thumbs and fingers of successive generations of devotees who used this prayer text. They represent a way of 'anointing', affirming the belief in the efficacy of their presence.

P. 4. ELEVEN-HEADED AVALOKITESHWARA: MURAL PANEL FROM THE SUMSTEK IN ALCHI
Alchi, Ladakh
Pub. in Pratapaditya Pal, 1982, Pl. S.62.

The Bodhisattva, conceived as a colossal figure, white of complexion, eleven-headed, twenty-two armed, is seen standing, legs slightly apart, the two front arms bent and brought lightly up against the chest, one hand held in *abhaya*, an expression of calm grace on the principal face. The tall and elegantly painted figure is surrounded by a large oval *prabha* which is oversected by another, a proper nimbus, that rises conically behind the massive pile of heads of Avalokiteshwara. As many as eleven heads are seen arranged very interestingly in five rows: the principal head has on its sides two more laterally placed heads; above this another register of three heads arranged laterally; yet another three above this; and topping all these are two heads arranged vertically. This yields five levels in which the eleven heads are organised. Because of the height of these eleven heads, the nimbus behind them, painted a dark orange, rises in a conical shape instead of the usual circular.

The heads are all differently coloured. The principal head is in white; other heads are in light grey, dark grey, nearly black, almond-coloured, orange-red. creamish white, and so on.

Taking into account the number of heads, the figure is provided with twenty-two arms, eleven on either side, double the number of heads. These arms spread out and form a halo of their own around the principal figure of Avalokiteshwara. Each hand carries a separate object, and one can discern garlands of flowers, rosaries, a vessel, a *pataka*, a bow, an arrow, a lotus, among them. One of the hands is lowered in a varada *mudra* while another is held against the chest in a slight variation of *abhaya*. The principal front left hand holds a *shankha*. Most of the arms seem to sprout from the elbow of the front two arms, even though it is possible to see some of the arms, towards the top, proceeding forth from the shoulders. The dominating impression is however of arms issuing from the elbows.

On either side of the principal image, adored by angels flying down from the heavens and playing upon instruments, are vertical panels in which images of the Buddhas and two women devotee figures are fitted. The women turn their bodies slightly towards Avalokiteshwara, and they seem to bring offerings in homage, but the Buddhas are seated in meditation, seen frontally, in the pose of imparting knowledge etc. The Buddhas are all seated on lotuses, the petals of which spread out prominently and are differently coloured to create a variegated effect. The

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same kind of long lotus petals mark the 'seats' of the devotee figures at the bottom. Avalokiteshwara himself stands on what is a 'double-lotus', some petals broad and expansive, pointing downwards, while those in the upper row point upwards to create a double effect.

The colours that mark the different petals of the lotuses are essentially the same that have been used in the various heads of Avalokiteshwara. In the background of the main figure, the nimbus, and behind the devotee figures standing at the bottom oranges, reds, light-blues and grey dominate. However they are used in such a fashion, and distributed so, that one does not get the impression that the colours used are really few.

The style of paintings in the Sumstek at Alchi has been discussed at length by several scholars. Pal (1982, 48-9), for instance, notes that in these there is no attempt to depict the third dimension. "On this supra-mundane Universe, neither Space nor Time has any reality, nor is there any day or night. There are no shadows or internal sources of light, within any of the compositional frames". Again: "However, the underlying abstraction is neither sterile nor chaotic, but always balanced, rhythmic and informed with harmony—whether the image is of a benign Buddha or of a fierce deity, and irrespective of stylistic variations, emphasis is always placed on harmony of design and translucent purity of colour. Light suffuses the entire surface with uniform intensity, for the image, the *mandala*, the paradise, or the ultimate truth, is the primal clear light".

The glowing colours of these murals especially in style I of Pratapaditya Pal's description, need to be emphasised. One also notices that the connection between the figuration of these murals at Alchi and the tenth-eleventh century "Kashmiri" sculptures has repeatedly been noted. The relationships are extensive, and one sees links between many monumental stucco figures at Alchi, the sculptures of Kashmir, the murals at Alchi, and work that one encounters in the Tibetan and Central Asian world. The connection with Kashmir is pointed out again and again, attention being drawn to the presence of Kashmiri artists in Western Tibet, and the role played by Rinchen-bzang-Po in introducing to that world craftsmen who brought from Kashmir their own style and laid the foundation of one kind of art in that entire region.

These points have been drawn attention to earlier in the present study. All that needs to be noticed here are certain conventions and devices used by the painters: the manner of arranging multiple heads, the colouring of the heads, the shape of the nimbus, the manner of treating the arms, the lotus seats, for instance. It is these that seem to have survived and resurfaced much later in the manuscript tradition of painting in Kashmir.

P. 5. MIRAJ: THE ASCENT OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Diwan* of Hafiz
9 cm x 7.3 cm
Private Collection, Kilchberg, Switzerland
Unpublished.

Riding the mythical Buraq, which has the face of a beautiful woman, the body of a horse, the tail of a peacock, and wings attached to its shoulders, the Prophet ascends heavenwards, his face concealed behind a veil following strict tradition, head nimbate. *Paris* and angels advance to receive and welcome him. The Prophet is seen clad in a long white *qaba* over which an open fronted mauve-coloured coat is worn, and a turban, also white, is tied over a scarlet *kulah*. A veil covers his face; a *morchhal* is waved by a *pari* over the Prophet. The *paris* are dressed in long *peshwaz*-like dresses in orange, scarlet, and purple, patterned with golden flowers and leaves; over their heads they sport close fitting flat caps. The angel is dressed quite like the *paris* but is distinguished from them by his turban. Staying close to the Prophet's mount, he holds his hands slightly cupped as if in prayer.

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The faces of the *paris* are virtually indistinguishable from each other, each seen in three-quarters profile, fair in complexion. The Prophet holds his right hand in a gesture of explication or instruction while the left hand meant to be holding the reins of Buraq is concealed in the extended sleeves of the gown. In the sky, against the darkness of the night dotted with little gold spots suggestive of stars, and far aove the earth—this is clearly suggested by the sun setting behind a hill-top shown under Buraq—four *paris* and an angel arrange themselves on either side of the Prophet. The *paris* float through the air, their long dresses sweeping behind them, their wings, prominently attached to their shoulders, held aloft: trays of offerings are held in the hands; one of them wears a prominent wavy lock of hair along the temple. Their femininity is suggested not through any configuration like that of breasts—but through the relatively soft features of the face.

The sky in the background is rendered a rough inky-blue, giving the painting a generally different aspect from others in this same manuscript, for the backgrounds are generally very differently coloured and no night effects are introduced. The night sky here and the sun well below the galloping Buraq, are elements in the iconography of the scene of the *Miraj* in Islamic art.

The scene is also identified on the top border of the page through a caption, written in the same hand as the text in *nastaliq*.

The relevance of this rendering of the Prophet's ascent to the *ghazal* of Hafiz which figures in the text on this page, is by no means direct. Neither the Prophet, nor this miraculous event, is referred to in any of the couplets. But as is common in illustrations of poetic works of this kind—whether of Hafiz or Sadi or Nizami - the painter picks up, in the absence of any narrative elements, some suggestive phrase or reference and provides an illustration, evidently drawing upon his own wide repertoire of scenes, images and themes. Here, the couplet directly above the illustration on this folio speaks of the sound reverberating through the "dome of the sky". For the painter, the mention of the "dome of the sky" is enough to bring in this image which he must have been well used to rendering in very different contexts.

The workmanship, as in the rest of the folios of this manuscript, is competent; the colours chosen with care and sensitivity, the composition well—almost too well—balanced. But the painting offers no surprises. It is an oft-repeated, well-rehearsed act that we see.

P. 6. HAFIZ IN CONVERSATION WITH HIS LOVED ONE
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Diwan* of Hafiz
9.5 cm x 6.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 57.13/2
Unpublished.

In what could be seen as one of the most characteristic and repeatedly seen visualisations of a verse from a classic work of poetry, like that of Hafiz or Sadi, the poet is shown seated in conversation with an unnamed loved one: she to whom he addresses questions, with whom he carries on an imaginary conversation. It could be the '*saqî*', the '*shakh-i-nibat*', '*mahru*' of one of such countless verses. As the painter renders this scene, the centre of attention is a young maiden, a woman of the world perhaps, who is seated on a terrace, with a mild and pleasant expression on the face, holding a cup of wine in her hand while Hafiz is shown seated next to her on the carpet, old and wizened by age, legs folded under him. The verses of a Hafiz *ghazal*, inscribed above and below the painting within this panel, speak repeatedly of a conversation: 'I said', says the poet, and 'she said' in response; no conversation is in fact in progress, but witty. meaningful, even profound exchanges are spoken of by the poet. Behind

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ordinary words, far deeper meanings lie, as in much mystic poetry. Thus, when the poet sees 'her' in a pleasant frame of mind, holding a cup of wine, one of the verses says, inside him the vision of a hundred images, as if reflected in mirrors, arose. What he is referring to is not necessarily the visible form of his 'beloved', even of any mortal: the thoughts that are coursing; through the poet's head, are possibly far more meaningful.

The painter, however, visualises—perhaps this is the only way open to him—a simple encounter between his beloved, who sits there like a *saqi*; and the poet.

The setting is that of an elegant terrace fronting a loggia in the background to which an awning is attached. The atmosphere is one of pleasantness, joy: the painter brings in a fountain in the foreground; an attendant holding a cup of wine in her hand ready to do her mistress's bidding; flowers that spring up in the sage-green patch in front of and behind the balustrade in the background. The poet is holding his hand in front of himself, as if conversing while the 'beloved' is seated, smiling, perhaps offering the wine-cup to him. It appears to be a usual encounter, a day oft-repeated perhaps in the life of the poet and his beloved, as the painter lays it out. Quite possibly the devoted reader of Hafiz, he to whom these verses recited or sung meant something that came from the soul and addressed a soul, was able to get more out of this kind of visualization of the verse, than the viewer today.

In its own way, the painting is well organised, even daintily done. Much attention has gone into the patterning of the architecture, the clothing, the landscape. One notices the care with which a flight of steps, painted blue, is delineated with an undulating pattern fronting it; or the gauze-like effect of water falling in the fountain placed in the fore-ground. The colours are chosen with care so that not one of them overshadows the other; in general they are also well applied. There is no great fineness in the work but, within its own category, the page is carefully controlled by the painter. The figures fit into types: the poet; the attendant; above all, the beloved. She is dressed in a *pairahan* with a long opening at the neck coming down almost to the navel, a pair of *pyjamas* barely visible because of the legs being tucked under her, a short jacket and a veil elegantly draped over her head. The painter, however, stays away from any suggestion of sexuality in the figure, not caring to exploit even slightly the open slit in her *pairahan*. There is no suggestion of breasts, no fullness of the body as we see it.

P. 7. LOVERS ENJOYING WINE AND MUSIC
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Khamsa* of Nizami
11 cm x 5.8 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No.51/136
Unpublished.

What in classical Persian poetry would be referred to as a *majlis* is rendered here on this page. On a carpeted terrace, the lovers are seated, each resting against a bolster placed against the latticed balustrade. While the lover, undoubtedly Yusuf, seems to address the beloved in the words of the text on this page, his beloved holds up a small cup of wine while gazing at him. At the nearer end of the carpet are seated four men, only one of them looking in the direction of the lovers. The two men at right are musicians, one of them playing upon a stringed instrument like a *barbat*, and the other on a small *dholak*-drum. The other two men, older and bearded, are possibly singers or reciters. The atmosphere of the *majlis* is emphasised through the placing of a single candle in a stand in the centre of the carpet. In the background is 'a palace': two windows are seen open with bamboo-chik curtains rolled and tied; arched patterns appear on the rest of the wall and the top crenellations.

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The image is typical of countless others that figure as illustrations of texts of classical Persian poetry: simple, but explicit in its intention. The context may not always be specific but the figures are made instantly recognisable, for example, Laila and Majnu; Khusrau coming upon Shirin bathing. A generalized context had to be maintained like that of a *bazm* or *majlis,* of lovers spending quiet evenings together, listening to music or reciting poetry. This enhanced the effect of the verses, adding a visual pleasure to the verbal for the reader.

The figures here are of an unspecified kind capable of being fitted into any context or situation. The bearded, grave-looking men, dressed in *qabas,* gowns and turbans, the youthful looking musicians, the handsome, well-clad 'beloved' holding a cup of wine seen here could as easily belong to a Nizami composition as to one from Hafiz, or Jami or Sadi. The treatment of the lady's figure is slightly unusual, she being fuller of body than usual. The breasts are quite prominently indicated even if not revealed. She also does not wear the flat skull cap of Kashmiri women seen in illustrations of poetic texts. She does however have a veil draped elegantly over her head, falling slightly towards the back, revealing the adornment of her hair with jewellery and ornaments of all kinds. The thick lock of hair, ending in a curl next to her ears, is very much like what one sees generally on women in Kashmiri painting. The painter makes a conscious attempt to introduce a variation in the architecture at the back; instead of a pavilion with a projected awning,set against the sky the entire background here is filled with architecture, the open windows with rolled and tied curtains being the painter's way of introducing a touch of delicacy.

As in the architecture, a certain amount of attention has gone into the two bolsters, which are differently coloured and patterned than usual. They are also not quite as large as those that appear behind deities in the usual illustrations of sacred Hindu texts. The design of the carpet is rendered emphatically squarish as if viewed from above; in this a well established convention is followed.

The painting is set in the middle of the page occupying most of it, but the panel has lines of text above and below it, the intention evidently being to integrate verse and image. One notices in the lower border some notes, also in Persian, explaining and paraphrasing part of the text: the copy was undoubtedly well-used.

P. 8. SADI IN A TEMPLE
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi
16 cm x 7.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 53.2/5
Unpublished.

A well-known passage from Sheikh Sadi's celebrated work, the *Bustan,* is picked by the painter here to provide an illustration. There is narrative interest in the passage, for it tells the tale, in Sadi's own words, of his having been to a temple in India, where he found 'the wearers of the sacred thread' perpetrating a fraud on a believing public. As Sadi states it, inside a temple was installed an idol which, according to the priests managing the temples, moved its limbs if the devotee approached it with a clean heart. Puzzled by this strange phenomenon, Sadi decided, he says, to linger at the temple and finally discovered the 'deceit' that the priests were practising. From behind a curtain, one of the Brahmins moved the arms of the idol which were tied with strings, invisible to the public but manipulable. Seeing this Sadi confronted the Brahmins with this deceit and put them to great shame. The 'idol worshippers' deserved to go to perdition in Sadi's view.

As the painter lays it out, the upper part of the painting shows the idol installed in the temple with some priests seated around, holding holy books in their hands.

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The Sheikh himself appears just below the parapet on which the image is placed on a throne. He is seen standing at the extreme right of the upper part of the page, wearing his long leather boots, a *qaba*, a long gown, and a turban; his face is heavily bearded. The moment chosen by the painter is after the uncovering of the Brahmin's deceit, and shame: one of the Brahmins is seen throwing himself into a well, unable to bear the humiliation. In the lower part of the page, four Brahmins are seen seated, inside a chamber, bodies bereft of energy, heads bent as if feeling the pangs of conscience. This part of the painting is separated from the upper part by a narrow band of purple and mauve, which tops the wall, and the door of the chamber in which the four Brahmins are seen seated.

There is much of interest in terms of the iconography that the painter uses. The 'idol' is made of gold and is shown seated cross-legged, two-armed, both arms held at an angle away from the body as if still and immobile. The *chowki* on which the idol is placed is set under an arch which is part of a larger structure, topped, interestingly, by three domes, the central one large and purple in colour and the two flanking it on either side in white. The Brahmin priests—one sees eight of them—are seated in embarrassment and repentance in the lower part. They are all uniformly dressed: *dhotis*; scarf draped across the chest; and a *kantopa* cap on the head. The *kantopa* cap is part of the 'iconography' undoubtedly of a Hindu priest. The Sheikh himself is shown old and wearing a grey beard: he belongs to an iconographic type seen in other illustrated manuscripts too. The 'well' into which one of the Brahmin priests falls is simply represented as a grey-coloured, domical area that rises vertically, towering over the lone tree in that part of the painting. The treatment of this well is not very different from the well seen in the *Shahnama* pages from which Bizhan is rescue by Rustam as Maniza watches.

The painter here introduces a certain sense of depth in the page, the splitting up of the leaf into two parts in itself helping to a certain extent. The upper part is handled, very consciously, in a manner that establishes receding planes. This is noticeably different from the manner in which the planes are generally established in Kashmiri work. The treatment of the trees is distinctive, much more detailed and firmer than commonly seen in Kashmiri works. The range of colours, with the oranges, the purples and the greens dominating, is very familiar from other works. So is the blue strip of sky at the top with its squiggly streaks of white and gold in it.

The page, like all pages in this manuscript, is illuminated, little triangles painted in gold and blue with floral work appearing at the top left, bottom left and middle-right of the page. The text is spread all over the page. Spilling outside the text and painted panels, it has to be read in the prescribed fashion: the part within the panel first, then moving into the top where it is written in diagonal lines, and down the page, first to the right and then to the bottom. In the middle the direction of the lines changes, but there is no break in continuity. The last couplet appears at the bottom left of the page.

P. 9. A MAIDEN BELABOURS AN OLD MAN
A folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Hamla-i-Haidari*
17 cm x 11 cm
The Denver Art Museum, Denver
Acc. No. O-IN-17/24-XVIII-1381

The context is not clear and the scene in this painted leaf remains essentially unidentified. The three lines of text in verse above, and the two lines below the painting, contain elaborate references to the lady running into a temper, throwing the man down and belabouring him: but in this part of the text the cause of her offence is not known. The man, grey-bearded and old, has been thrown on the floor, his hair flying off in one direction, and his big turban in the other. As the

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text says, the lady abuses the man squarely, stamps on his chest, calls him names and sharply tells him that 'this was no matter for jest'.

The violence of the action comes as a surprise placed as it is in a setting in which one would ordinarily expect lovers and beloveds seated sharing a cup of wine and listening to music. The characters involved are commonly seen in Kashmiri miniatures: a grey-bearded man in a *qaba*-gown, a turban and leather boots, and a young woman wearing a *peshwaz*, and veil. One could encounter them anywhere—whether they were the illustrated verses of Sadi, Hafiz or Nizami. This text, however, is a Shia work with a different tenor and subject. When an altercation like this occurs in the narrative, all that the painter does is to draw upon his rich and oft-used repertoire of images of a couple of this description. He introduces only alterations in the stances without changing very much in the essentials. Thus, the old man's figure is placed horizontally here, but nothing else changes in his configuration: not a hair is out of place. The change in the stance of the young woman is a little more. She is not the *saqi*, or the usual beloved; a hint of agitation is discernible on her face even if she does not appear as spirited as the text describes her.

The architectural setting is a little ambitious; there is a double-arched chamber at the back, with curtains rolled up inside, and strings hanging down; walls extend on either side of the chamber with doorways prominently shown; in place of the usual single flight of steps two flights of steps are introduced as if to suggest that this is a large, 'palatial', structure. This impression is sought to be further affirmed and reinforced through the fountain in which three different jets are visible, and a stone water channel in a wavy pattern is brought in to suggest agitation. The cistern in which the fountains are placed is, surprisingly, not completely rectangular as if seen from above, but is rendered with the same pseudo-perspective that one sees used in the flight of steps.

The sky shows no departure from the usual, consisting as it does of an inky blue surface with squiggly, white and grey clouds. The colouring is, again, predictably the same that one sees in copies of Hafiz and Sadi etc., oranges, yellows, reds and moss-greens dominating the page, with large areas in pink and purple brought in.

The colophon of this manuscript mentions briefly its being painted in the year A.H. 1252/AD 1836. This is followed by the usual prayers on behalf of the scribe, and the invocation of Divine Grace upon the reader and the writer of the text. There is no name of painter or scribe; nor is the place of execution mentioned.

P. 10. RUSTAM SLAYS THE WHITE DIV
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of Firdausi's *Shahnama*
8.5 cm x 6.5 cm
Coll, B.M. Aggarwal, New Delhi
Unpublished

Among the many episodes of the *Shahnama* that center upon the great heroic figure of Rustam, is one in which he traces, tracks down and kills the white Div. The battle between the two rages for a long time but finally Rustam, being the great warrior that he was, triumphs. Here we see him overpowering the Div inside the cave in which he has located him. He has in fact jumped on to the body of the Div, after having servered one of his legs which lies at some distance from the Div's body. Rustam is seen holding the Div by the torque around his neck as he thrusts his dagger into his heart. The heart, as the text says, will eventually be pried out. The Div is seen here dying, raising great lamentations. True to the description, the painter colours the Div very fair, even as he renders him like a demon complete with a tail although with no horns; his body is bare except for a pair of shorts around his loins. The angry eye-brows, the shaven head to which he raises his hapless right hand, the blood-shot eyes, the tongue

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lolling from his mouth, the protruding fangs, all make the Div look very much the evil figure that he is in Firdausi's text. Rustam, on the other hand, is composed and very much in control of himself as he overpowers the Div. He is instantly recognisable—the Kashmiri painter following established 'iconography'—by the tiger-skin cap he wears on his head. A bow is slung across his right shoulder; a quiver is tied to his waist, but what he uses to slay the Div is his dagger. He is dressed in a long *qaba*-like *jama* over which a hip-length coat is worn; the lower limbs are clad in striped white breeches which are tucked into long leather boots. He is youthful looking; the beard is perfectly black, the face fresh and energetic. The beard is of uneven length, V-shaped, a tooth-like point separating its two parts that come down to his chest. The hero's head is adorned with a little pennant stuck, *sarpesh*-like, into the tiger-skin cap.

The entire action takes place inside a grey circle, meant to be seen as the inside of the cave to which one sees no obvious opening. The grey circle is simply set like a floating surface in the midst of rocky mountains, painted in stark orange-red and aubergine. The mountain is bare except for an occasional sprig of flowers. The mountainous part of the landscape occupies nearly three fourths of the entire page; at the bottom is another series of bare rocks, oval and flat, their ends sometimes concealing animal faces, as is often seen in early Persian painting. Outside the cave, in the lower half of the painting towards the right, another Div, brown-complexioned, holding a mace in his left hand, is seen tied to a tree. While he stands there menacing but helpless, Rustam's steed Rakhsh, painted in purple with a dappled skin, keeps an eye on this Div. Rakhsh is handsomely painted, alert and full of energy. He is not obviously tethered to a rock or a tree, Rustam being sure of his mount. The low tree in the picture serves the purpose of tying to it the Div outside the cave. This tree interestingly is rendered with very loose brush work in dark and pale green. Towards the top of the painting an inky sky appears with narrow, lightly billowing, white clouds.

The painting is placed in the middle of the page with the text in *nastaliq* script written in four columns both above and below, as is usual in *Shahnama* manuscripts. The painter clearly must have had access to a 'Persian' model for the iconography of Rustam; the setting of the scene of the slaying of the Div; the placing of the captive Div outside the cave; the treatment of the rocks; the convention of showing the inside of the cave against a grey circular ground with no opening provided; every thing frontally and fully visible. However, like in so many Kashmiri *Shahanamas*, the rendering is very simplified as compared to Persian prototypes. Local conventions have asserted themselves over the subtle renderings of the Persian kind, and one notices the painter using his own palette and line. It is of interest to notice that almost exactly the same composition—the same rendering of mountains and caves and trees; the same placing of Rakhsh and the Div outside—can be seen in other *Shahnama* manuscripts from Kashmir. It is as if the painters carried the images in their entirety in their heads to be reproduced whenever called upon to do so. Their repertoire was extensive; their ability to summon images instantly to the mind quite remarkable.

P. 11. PAINTED BOOK COVERS
From an illustrated manuscript of the Kulliyat of Sadi
28.5 cm x 16.3 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Unpublished.

Of all the arts of the books, bindings and painted book-covers have survived in the fewest numbers from Kashmir. There is little doubt that this aspect of the arts was, like in Persia, highly developed, distinguished practitioners of it, *mujallids*, occupying an honoured place among craftsmen. The present pair of painted covers, clearly belonging to the manuscript of the *Kulliyat* of Sadi which they

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enfold, is among the rare surviving examples of the craft. The quality of their workmanship makes one regret the circumstance of the disappearance of countless others.

In many respects, it is hard to distinguish this pair of book-covers, painted on papier-mache, from those that one knows from the Persian world. The conception, the colour-scheme, the delicate workmanship, the whole execution, is very close to Persian models. This pair has, fortuitously, the name of the craftsman inscribed on both sides, the inscription, in very minute *nastaliq* characters, occupying an obscure corner of the central panel and reading: *'Aml-i Aziz Mughal'* (The work painted by Aziz Mughal). There is nothing that we know of this distinguished craftsman, apart from the signatures that have survived on this pair of book covers.

The design is conceived in terms of a central vertically-placed panel around which there is a narrow margin of flowers and stem, gold against a black background, then comes a broad border, exclusively consisting of flowers and buds and leaves in different sizes, the two flowers most preferred being the local and greatly popular *yazmbal*, and what is possibly a stylised lotus. This broad border is edged by another margin on all sides, repeating the one that is around the central panel, flowers and stems in gold against a black background. The central panel, superbly conceived and executed, is the one that is designed to draw most attention to itself. A profusion of flowers, buds, leaves and stems in seeming disorder, but in fact very tightly organised, fills the panel, which has a uniform, flat background of golden yellow. The flowers are seen from various angles and in different states of budding and blossoming. Roses and *yazmbal* are instantly recognisable: rendered with great delicacy, each petal carefully shaded, the colours moving from dark to light, the inside and the outside aspects of the flowers in their delicate beauty caught in various hues. The wonderfully observed, dark leaves throw the colours of the flowers in sharp relief. Scattered throughout these artfully arranged flowers and leaves are numerous birds, painted often small, and at varied angles, sometimes merging with the pattern of the flowers and stems so as to be virtually indistinguishable from them. These little birds, bulbuls and wrens, are never shown idle, as if sitting on a branch, looking up; almost always, they are seen getting hold of a flying moth or butterfly within their beaks, drinking nectar from the core of a blossoming flower. The fluttering of the moths and the butterflies as they get caught in the bird's beaks is very sensitively rendered, the painter getting the opportunity to show tremulous and diaphanous spread-out wings. There is life in this garden, the painter seems to say, if seen from close.

The design of the covers partakes of the same language that the makers of papier-mache objects put to their own use while turning out pen-cases, or decorative plates, and jewellery boxes and the like. It is of interest to see that the colour scheme—it has undoubtedly a different feel to it because of the lacquer—is different from the one that we see in painting, the violets and mauves and purples not being so prominent, and the general distribution of colour being quite different. The tradition of painting book-covers in Kashmir remained, it would seem, far closer to the Persian tradition than painting in Kashmir eventually did. The input from local or native pre-Muslim strains in this art appears to be minimal.

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P. 12. *A SARLAUH*
From an illustrated manuscript of the *Shahnama*
15 cm x 12.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 56.19/3
Unpublished.

This *sarlauh* is not the finest work of Kashmiri illumination, but it is very typical of the kind one finds in manuscripts, with a strong stylistic affiliation essentially to the Islamic, Persian, tradition. It would be difficult to locate a complete manuscript written in Persian, from India or outside, that would have no illumination on the opening pages. In some ways the *sarlauh* served as a frontispiece, the clearest possible indication of the text beginning on that folio. However, in Kashmiri hands, the *sarlauh* was by no means confined to manuscripts dealing with Persian texts alone, or to texts that came from the Persian world. Numerous manuscripts have survived, written in different scripts with texts in Persian, Hindi or Sanskrit, which routinely open with a *sarlauh*. There are several which feature illuminated double-pages at the opening, following the sumptuous tradition of manuscript writing and illumination.

Even when the format of a manuscript shifts from the vertical, codex kind—which was most usual in 'Islamic' manuscripts—and becomes horizontal, as in so many prayer or *gutka* manuscripts from Kashmir, the *sarlauh* is artfully woven into the opening page on which either a beautifully decorated and illuminated text appears in the central panel, or a painting does. In such cases, the context having changed, the arabesques that one sees in the usual *sarlauh* travel to the outer edges of the page, broad borders, narrow margins, and the like: the outward aspect is not that of a *sarlauh*, but one clearly knows where the tradition and the inspiration comes from.

The quality of *sarlauhs* in Kashmiri work varies a great deal, from the very sumptuous, almost approaching high Persian standards, to the very routine and perfunctory: it is possible, after examining a number of texts with *sarlauhs,* to discern a Kashmiri work. Subtly, over a period of time, the aspect changes. A general resemblance to the Persian prototypes is kept; an awareness of the tradition can be discerned; but the colours, the arrangements of shapes and motifs and certainly the execution, becomes very different.

The *sarlauh* here has seemingly an intricate arabesque and fillet design, loops and curves and arches and hooks, all artfully mixed and integrated. The strict two-dimensionality of the page is kept and emphasised; the entire pattern of ornamentation is completely flat, with no shading, no suggestion of depth whatsoever. Most of the ornamental work is in the form of flowers, stems and scrolls, done in gold within arabesque patterns outlined by an orrange-red, uneven but thick line. Interestingly, here the outlines become purple-pink, picking up from a favourite Kashmiri colour. The rays or spikes that rise from the top feature of the *sarlauh*, are extremely abbreviated and are nothing like the elegant lines that proceed from the edges of a design in Persian painting. A remembrance of those however seems to be preserved here. The margins here shift, in contrast to high quality Persian work, to simple, narrow bands of floral work, flowers, stems and leaves painted in orange, pink and green against a gold ground, reminiscent more of the kind of standard decoration on papier-mache objects than of the fine illuminations from Persia. The extent of the gold used is not much, nor is the quality of the gold high. The page does not dazzle even though the intention on the part of the *mudhabhib* is to achieve that.

A horizontal panel, the *unwan*, also appears here, the auspicious, invocatory words, '*bismillah al-rahman al rahim*; being fitted in. In the same kind of space in manuscripts of Hindu or Sikh texts, the words would change, becoming *Shri Ganeshaya namah*, or *Ek Onkar Satgur Prasad*. The format of the *unwan* is

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however, kept. In manuscripts of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavata Purana* and the like, of which large numbers have survived, sometimes where a *sarlauh* is to appear, and in chapter headings, a painting is introduced surrounded by illumination: but it occupies the same place on the page, the top half, that a *sarlauh* would have. Here, the text as of this prose rendering of the *Shahnama*, the *Shahnama-i-Shamshirkhani*, starts from the lower half of the page, and continues on to the next, as is usual.

P. 13. KRISHNA AND ARJUNA IN THE CHARIOT
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagavadgita*
11.5 cm x 18 cm
Galerie Marco-Polo, Paris
Unpublished.

This scene, with Arjuna in his chariot driven by Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, is all too familiar, for one comes upon it in countless manuscripts of the *Bhagavadgita*. It is almost a natural choice for an illustrator, for not only does it provide the central theme of the work: it is also one of the few scenes that one can pick from a text that has virtually no narrative content. In illustrated manuscripts, after the opening, invocatory paintings at the beginning, the scene introduced at the head of the text provides the setting for the ensuing text.

As the scene is rendered, at least at this moment, there is no hesitation on the part of Arjuna; confidently he sits on the principal hind part of the chariot, holding his arrows and bow while Krishna, as his *sarathi*, blows upon the conch-shell, exactly as the text says. But nothing is seen in response to Arjuna's request to take his chariot where he can see the armies ranged against him. There is no suggestion of the battlefield here, except for a soldier carrying a tiny banner. The background is rendered a flat green and there is no sign of any other warriors ranged on the opposite side, or of pennants fluttering in the air. It is as if the scene has been abstracted from the text and rendered in itself as an icon.

The chariot takes much the usual form that chariots of this kind take in Kashmiri illustrations. In evidence is the great fondness of the painter for pink and purple combinations and for the motif of lotuses and lotus-petals. The body of the chariot, and certainly its lower part, is painted in the same colours, as is the lotus-petal base of the domed canopies of both segment of the chariot. Even the projecting awning in front of the portion where Krishna sits is treated in the same lotus petal pattern. The saddlery on the horses, even their manes, are painted in the same colour. This colour is picked up yet again in the foot soldier's banner and in the curves defining the ground at the bottom.

The lower part of the ground, just below the large area of green behind the chariot, is treated quite poetically: a suggestion of undulatory rocks in different colours, red, pink, purple, orange being brought in, succeeds in lending a rhythm to the page. The same rhythms are picked up towards the top of the page where the green ground ends in a scallop; above it is a streak of orange; just below a flat strip of blue indicates the sky.

There is no intention on the painter's part to work things out logically in the placing of figures, the structure of objects or the scale on which the objects are painted. Thus, from where Krishna is seated, blowing upon his conch-shell, he would scarcely be able to see, considering the manner in which the awning in front is placed: it would obscure his vision. The solid wheels of the chariot again seem to have nothing to do with the body of the chariot which lightly rests upon them. No connection is established, no functionality intended. The treatment of the legs of the horses, being painted an obligatory red, is also purely conventional: the hind legs of both the horses are firmly placed on the ground, while the fore-legs paw the air as if in preparation for moving forward. Convention is what guides the painter: he seems to be asserting at the same time

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that what he is painting is essentially an iconic image. Within this conventional framework, however, there is delicacy of feeling notwithstanding the rough and inaccurate detailing or the careless application of colours.

P. 14. ARJUNA'S VISION: THE COSMIC FORM OF VISHNU-KRISHNA
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagavadgita* in Persian translation
12 cm x 7.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 66.98
Unpublished.

This vision of the cosmic form of Vishnu-Krishna, gained by Arjuna through special sight bestowed upon him on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, is entirely typical of the renderings of the scene one sees in Kashmiri illustrations in manuscripts of the *Bhagavadgita*. This, in fact, is the standard rendering of the theme. Krishna is shown seated, cross-legged, staring straight in front; from his mouth and behind his head, is formed a great effulgent circle of a multitude of figures condensed mostly in the form of heads. Within this circle, rendered here within a broad orange line from which rays of gold issue forth, several figures are recognisable: Shiva, his locks matted and the Ganga proceeding from them; Brahma, youthful and four-headed; Vishnu himself, blue-complexioned and crowned. These three, representing the great Indian triad, sum up for the painter the world of the gods. There is more within this circle than just heads. There are animals that serve as the vehicles of the great gods; also other animals representing other levels of being: one sees, thus, an elephant, a horse, a cow, a deer, a leopard, among them. The creation in all its variety of colour and denseness is sought to be portrayed. This is the painter's statement of the Universe picking up as he does the resonant, eloquent words of the text.

In this standard rendering Krishna is almost always shown seated. Here, he is endowed with sixteen arms, various objects held in the hand as emblems. One easily recognises the four most commonly associated with Vishnu himself: *shankh*, *chakra*, *gada*, and *padma*; besides these, there are others that hint at different deities: *ankusha*, bow, *trishula*, *pasha*. The body rendered in blue and the decorated yellow garment of Vishnu are in keeping with iconography.

Arjuna stands at a slight distance, gazing at this vision, stupefied, hands folded in adoration. He too is seen here, in standard fashion, dressed in a helmet, a coat of mail worn over a *jama*, and tight pyjmas. His bow and quiver of arrows lie, out of indecision, close to his feet, useless.

Interestingly, the painter turns the vision into an icon. Instead of setting it in the open, as provided in the text, a special effort is made to provide it an indoor setting: a trefoil-arch set against the inky-blue of the background, the brownish-yellow architecture, are noticeable; a canopy supported by four thin poles and made up of the usual textiles in orange, green and pink is spread over the heads of Krishna and Arjuna. The scene is set on a terrace edged by a narrow white balustrade in the back and a crenellated edge at the bottom in the front. The floor is painted a rich red on which a large stylised lotus, petals opening in all directions, pericarp painted a rich orange, is placed. This is the seat of Vishnu One notices, however, that the lotus serves only a symbolic purpose, for it does not bear the deity's weight, being almost entirely visible and barely sat upon.

The process by which the lotus-flower in full blossom is painted is of interest. The painter first seems to have made a circle in dark pink and then outlined upon it individual petals, colouring their tips and outlines a deep purple individually.

The painting is set in the middle of the page with a line of text in Persian, in *nastaliq* characters, appearing above and below.

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P. 15. BHASMASURA SEEKS THE BLESSINGS OF SHIVA
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagavata Purana*
12.5 cm x 9 cm
The Denver Art Museum, Denver
Acc. No. O-1N-17-XVII-1545
Unpublished.

This episode in the *Purana* speaks of the demon Bhasmasura who set out to propitiate Shiva. Having resolved to gain his heart's desire through a boon from Shiva, he embarked upon great austerities culminating in an extraorodinary sacrifice: lighting the sacred fire, the demon poured no ordinary libations into the fire but, in the name of Shiva, started to feed it with parts of his own body; for seven days, the text says, he kept doing this, slowly slicing off his body, till he was reduced to a bleeding ghost of himself. Then, as a final sacrifice, he decided to cut his own head off and offer it. Pleased with this great devotion, Shiva appeared, gave *darshana* to this devotee, and granted him the boon that he sought. The boon Bhasmasura asked was to gain the power of reducing anyone on whose head he would place his hand, to ashes. This was to have disastrous consequences, for Bhasmasura who, once he had the power, ran amuck, threatening Shiva himself. Eventually it was Vishnu who, through a clever artifice, succeeded in destroying Bhasmasura.

The painter chooses to render the climactic moment of the first half of the story as he visualises it: Shiva and Parvati appearing before Bhasmasura, giving *darshana*. The lower half of the page shows a landscape, unlike the one generally seen in Kashmiri painting: a river falling into a lake, rows of cypresses and other trees; rocky mountains, topped by snowy peaks. Perhaps what he is suggesting is the setting of the Kailasha mountain, and the stream may well be the painter's idea of bringing in the Ganga, associated as she is with Shiva and his matted locks. In the upper half is seated Bhasmasura, truly inventively rendered with his torso, shoulders and arms reduced to a skeletal frame on account of his having cut pieces of flesh off from them; he gazes at Shiva and Parvati as they appear to him, both of them seated on a lotus which is placed on a large spread-out tiger skin. The fire in the background already contains balls of flesh that Bhasmasura has thrown in as oblations; he holds another ball in his right hand. The preparation that he made to cut his own head off is not shown here, but the context is well and clearly established. While Shiva and Parvati assume their usual forms and appear very familiar—the iconography, the figuration, the colouring, all well known—Bhasmasura is the one that attracts notice. Much that we see here is familiar in this painting in respect of colour, figuration and treatment. The fact that the lower part of the painting is devoted to a pure landscape is, however, quite different and takes one by surprise. Shiva is seen wearing, on the upper part of his body, a *choli*-like garment made of leopard skin, something that we see on many *Ardhanarishwara* images from Kashmir, the male part, not the female, dressed in this kind of *choli* made of animal skin.

The right margin of the painting which occupies the better part of the text panel has a caption in Persian, identifying the scene. The phrasing of the caption, and its placing, apart from the style of the painting itself, bring this work very close to two distinguished manuscripts in the National Museum, the *Ram Charitmanas* of Tulsidas and the *Ram Geeti Katha*. Perhaps the work owes itself to the hand of the same group of scribes and artists that was responsible for these two. The stylistic similarities are very strong.

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P. 16. HANUMANA GUARDS HIS ARMY AT NIGHT
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of *Ramacharitamanasa*
20 cm x 10 cm cm.
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 86/154
Unpublished.

Among the stirring and wondrous happenings that take place during the invasion of Lanka by Rama and his forces there is the episode of Ahi-Ravana, not Ravana himself but one related to him, as taking recourse to deceit in order to gain an advantage for the Lankan army. He arrives in the disguise of Vibhishana, the demon-prince who was dedicated to Rama, in the dead of night, ostensibly to have a *darshana* of Rama, but in fact to wreak destruction among the monkey hordes. As the painter envisages the scene, Rama and Lakshmana, the two warriors, are asleep; so is the major part of the army of Rama consisting of monkey warriors. Only Hanumana, ever watchful, ever devoted, keeps guard: when the fake Vibhishana arrives, someone who is always welcome in Rama's camp, Hanumana quickly sees through the disguise and takes preventive measures. While Rama and Lakshmana, in his judgement, can fend for themselves, he quickly throws up a fortification around the sleeping contingent of the army, lengthening his tail enormously and encircling his men with it, as if constructing an instant rampart. At the same time, raising his mace, he challenges Ahi-Ravana.

It is not usual to see night-effects in Kashmiri paintings, for every thing happens in bright light even when the time of night is indicated, as in most Indian painting, through the presence of lamps or candles. Here the painter fills the entire ground of the page with a dark inky blue, from bottom to top. The night sky is further indicated by a crescent moon and little white dots that serve as stars, all rather hastily painted. In the upper part of the leaf, Rama and Lakshmana, Rama blue-complexioned and nimbate, Lakshmana fair-complexioned, lie horizontally, asleep, under two trees that loop and curl over them in rhythmic fashion, spreading their flowering branches. A brief rocky feature, placed horizontally, and in the usual purple and pink colours, is brought in. In the lower half of the painting the encounter of Ahi-Ravana and Hanumana is shown, Hanumana rendered much smaller in scale, at least for the moment, than the demon king. The seven monkey warriors who represent a segment of the large armies of Rama, are seen lying, arranged in a kind of vertical column, as if levitating in the air, each slightly distant from his neighbour. Hanumana's figure is coloured mauve pink; so is his long tail which makes an enormous loop around the army and then falls downwards, almost brushing Hanuman's own forehead. Each of the seven sleeping figures in the army is quite consciously coloured differently, ranging from orange-red to tawny brown, yellow, dark brown, white and so on. The weapon of each one of the warriors, a mace, lies by his side; the colours of the brief garments that the warriors wear, short drawers or scarfs, are subtly varied to contrast with the colour of their skin.

One senses the painter thinking as he draws. While rendering the figure of Ahi-Ravana, he does not hesitate at all in making his sword, tied to his waist, cut into the outer border of the picutre; but when it comes to Hanuman's tail, instead of it curling upwards, it falls in a diagonal and then almost straightens out to brush the earth: this is an unusual rendering. The tail should ordinarily have been going up in a curl; but for pictorial reasons perhaps, the painter does not make it go past the border and touch the sword which already has crossed it. The layout of the page shows no hesitation whatever on the painter's part, even though this may be the first time that he is rendering a scene like this. Boldly, in a forthright manner, he spreads the action about, using the known set of conventions with impressive inventiveness.

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The painted part of the page is placed in the middle, a line of text above and another one below it. On the other side is a floral margin against gold, lotuses and leaves and fine stems seen in a continuous meander of the kind that the painter of Kashmir as much as the papier-mache decorator so loved. In the border at right, the caption of the painting is written in red ink in Persian. Here a departure is being made from the text which is in Hindi even though the script is in Persian characters in *nastaliq*.

P. 17. A DEMON APPROACHES A KING INSIDE A CAVE
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of an anthology of texts
25 cm x 14.5 cm
Private Collection.

The episode treated of here by the painter is difficult to identify exactly in the absence of the text which would have provided the context. But a deep sense of mystery and strange happenings belongs to the folio. At bottom right, a king, almost certainly Indra, arrives on his divine vehicle, the Airavata elephant: there are small indications of eyes all over his body; close to him there is even a tiny inscription in Persian characters which possibly reads: *Indra Raja*. The action is taking place inside the cave, shown here as a dark, uneven area opening into the rock. Inside, a princely figure is shown seated cross-legged in a swing-like contraption suspended from a peg. An enormous demon—grey-coloured, brown locks flowing, fangs protuding, serpents draped over his body and dressed in just a dark-pink animal skin thrown around his loins—approaches the king, arm raised, as if threatening. Outside, a wheel-like object, possibly Vishnu's *chakra* seems to be in motion, as if about to enter the cave itself. Behind, on the other side of a large, rising mountain made up of purple rocks that go up in a crescendo, trees, goats and a tiger's head are seen, adding to the mystery of the goings on. Whether it is Vritrasura who appears as the demon in this painting, an adversary of Indra in the texts, is not clear. But the encounter inside the cave is by no means friendly, even if a battle has not yet broken out. The gesture of the demon is threatening, although the king shows no sign of panicking as he sits, composed, in the swing.

The colours, even if slightly roughly laid, are rich and glowing; blue, orange-red, purple, green and a large area of a grey-black, share the page between themselves. The treatment of the trees, the elephant, the tiger's head, present no great surprises. There is boldness in the manner in which the area of the 'cave' has been opened up in the middle of the page, a great cavity in the side of an unspecified mountain. The domical area at the bottom right of this 'cave', is undoubtedly its mouth rendered in an abstract manner. The superb, decorative treatment of the swing, the seat of which is seen from above, makes a nearly perfect, dramatic circle with its yellow and orange strings. The figure of the demon is finely conceived, the colours used for the body, the hair, the animal skin round the loins, giving it extraordinary presence.

It is easy to see relationships between the conventions used for the cave and the animals peeping from behind the mountains in this painting and some early Persian work. The painter however seems to be almost unaware of this connection, judging from the free manner in which he uses these conventions and almost succeeds in subverting them.

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P. 18. RAJA PRITHU SUBDUES THE EARTH-COW
From a manuscript of an anthology of sacred texts
25 cm x 12.5 cm
Private Collection.
Unpublished.

The early and dramatic episode from the *Bhagavata Purana* in which the earth is made to yield her riches to the world is the unusual theme of this painting. The entire series of events leading up to this point in the text are dramatic and meaningful in the extreme. When the earth stops yielding her bounties to men, they turn to their king Prithu, the first of them all. The Raja pursues the earth who, taking the form of a cow, flees. A long chase ensues and, finally, the earth is captured. In this great episode, the Raja then summons all creatures of the earth to come and take from her all that she is capable of yielding and all that is their wont to take. From semi-divines to creatures that crawl, from *pischachas* to animals of prey, every one appears in turn, one of them turning into a calf, which suckles at the teats of the earth-cow, so that she would begin to yield milk, her treasures, to that category of beings.

Here, as the painter lays it out, the sequence moves from top to bottom. Prithu, seated in his chariot, takes aim at the cow who is seen in a circle of concentric rings; towards the middle, Prithu sits down to milk the cow himself, while the gods Shiva and Brahma appear, a little lower down. Facing a great mountain a bare-headed sage, hair tied in a bun at the back, is seen standing along with a *vatsa*; at the very bottom there are other creatures, including a many-hooded serpent coiling up: everyone is awaiting his turn at milking the Earth-Cow.

The range of colours and the conventions are all familiar; the manner of organising the planes with the help of flat colours, orange, green, violet-purple, green again, and at the top a strip of blue; the articulation of figures; the gestures; the stylisation of trees; the mountains; the manner of showing the horses,the fore-legs of one of them pawing the air, etc. But using these, the painter turns out a superb composition, lively, meaningful, leading the eye from one significant, colourful passage to another. The circle of concentric rings, consisting of various colours—yellow, orange, purple, red, blue, white—in the midst of which the cow appears create a bold pattern. It is difficult to understand what the painter was rendering here, unless he was making a reference to various 'earths' from Prithvi down to *rasatala, talatala*, etc. The texts speak of the gods who stand awaiting their turn, while Prithu milks the cow. The painter, skilfully, does not depict the lower parts of their bodies to avoid showing them resting their feet on the ground. Prominently, Brahma seems to be floating, even though standing on earth, the lower part of body stopping at the thighs, just above a *vatsa* that stands below him. The hills, consisting of purple and pink rocks set densely together and steadily rising in a profusion of small peaks to form a mountain, are again, superbly handled. Everything is set forth with great clarity. At the same time, the painter takes care to bring in very subtle overlaps that keep one from seeing the different planes as unconnected with each other. The tree at the bottom cuts from the red background on to the green plane above it; the feet of the *vatsa* close to Shiva are on the green plane and then cut on to the orange-red in the middle; the cow as it is being milked by Prithu, like the head of Brahma, obtrudes upon the deep aubergine coloured hill; the hooves of the horses extend from the green area above; and the cow at the very top traverses both earth and sky.

The colours are laid a little coarsely, patches showing, but they stand out luminous and rich, echoing the texture and drama of this episode. The circle on which the earth-cow stands, the richly decorated chariot with the lotus-leaf pattern at the top and an orange-red canopied structure, the aubergine-coloured hill in the middle of the painting, all stand out prominently. Continuous narration is used, the cow and king Prithu being shown first at the top and then again in the middle of the painting.

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P. 19. THE SNAKE SACRIFICE OF RAJA PARIKSHIT
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Mahabharata*
17.5 cm x 12 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

The scene is laid out with perfect clarity: Raja Parikshit, at whose behest the great snake sacrifice is being conducted, is shown seated on a circular *asana,* a small bolster behind his back, placed so as to set him apart from the group of remaining persons in the painting. There are no other signs of royalty; no *chhatra,* no *chamara,* appear: these two details alone distinguish him from the rest of the company. Likewise, the presiding priest, seated directly below the Raja, sits on an *asana* but without the bolster behind him. There is dialogue in progress, the Raja's hand slightly raised, in the approved fashion, while Indra, wearing his crown, slightly bent, carries on a conversation with the Raja. The context is related to the great Naga Vasuki, engaging the Raja in a discussion. They argue for the continuation of the *yajna,* in which all snakes, from all directions, from the celestial spheres and the terrestial, are being drawn to the fire and destroyed. There are, in the scene, courtiers and other priests, clearly distinguished by being bare in the upper part of the body, and wearing *kantopa* caps. It is in this manner that the painter establishes professions etc.The fire burns steadily, its five flames, orange-coloured, spiky, rising into the air, brief squiggles of white mixed with them. The logs of wood are placed directly below the fire, although they do not seem to be much related to it; the black-grey circle around the fire is perhaps the sandy base on which the fire has been lit.

It is not the distribution of the ten figures in the painting, however, that lends a certain movement to the page: it is the snakes which come slithering in from all directions white, sandal-coloured, bluish-green, one of them with three heads. Their wavy forms, carefully varied and disposed, are seen to form the core of the composition. The fire is placed exactly in the middle of the page, cutting across the flat red ground at the bottom and the green at the top. Everything seems to move towards it; the snakes drawn by its total attraction, the viewer's eye directed towards it from the bottom upwards, further attention being centred on it by the curving white form of the snake that is about to hurl himself into it head downwards.

Care is taken by the artist while distributing the colours of the dresses that the men in this painting wear. The scheme is rather simple, but by placing an orange against a green, and blue and mauve against red, a certain movement is imparted to the page. With very limited dramatic means, thus, the painter persuades the viewer's eye to move constantly. The architectural details are all partly eliminated, the Raja's palace being briefly hinted at by a white structure at the top right. Noticeable is a simple, direct logic in the kind of choice of colours that fill the background. The strip of blue at the top clearly stands for the sky; the streak of orange below it possibly hints at the time being that of sunset; the green that fills the upper part of the page for the most part defines the open spaces, the earth; and the red rectangular band at the lower edge points to this being a carpeted area. The drawing has the usual, casual quality, no individualisation or portraiture being aimed at. The colours are applied rather hastily. One notices the imprecision in the left part of the page where an uneven, narrow surface along the rule remains uncoloured. The top of the painted panel, just below the two lines of script, is uneven as is the bottom.

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P. 20. THE GODDESS AND SHIVA RECEIVE HOMAGE
25.5 cm x 35 cm
Coll. Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh
Acc. No. 4402
Unpublished.

What the artist presents here is homage being offered to the Goddess, and to Shiva, from all directions, celestial and earthly. The Goddess, seated cross-legged on a lotus, which is placed in turn upon an octagonal, large *chowki,* is seen full-faced, four-armed, objects in her hands clearly specified: a vessel, a large sword, a lotus, and a cup. Crowned, with a *chhatra* atop her seat, garlanded, a serpent adorning her neck and upper part of the chest, she looks resplendant here, the effect being added to by a large group of pennants—gaily coloured in yellow, pink, red, and white—that flutter around her, having been planted perhaps as offerings. Beneath her throne two tigers look away in opposite directions, mouths open, tongues lolling. Between them, on the carpeted floor is a little receptacle with similiar pennants, much smaller in size, flying. While the Goddess's throne is raised on an irregularly shaped carpet, with a floral field edged by a yellow border, Shiva who sits much like her on a lotus which is placed on a throne, cross-legged, four-armed, is placed just outside of the carpeted area. In his hand, again, are objects that one is familiar with; a *trishul,* skull, the stem of a flower, perhaps a lotus now not seen, a bejewelled rod, perhaps the handle of an axe. The figure is bare but for a tiger-skin wrapped around the loins; full faced with matted locks piled up on the head, the third eye placed in the middle of the forehead, a snake adorning his chest and neck. Above, in the celestial spheres, the greatest of the gods gather to pay homage: in the centre Vishnu and Lakshmi; in the midst of a spread lotus forming an aureole at the right the Goddess Sharada, five-faced, sitting on a lotus, placed atop her vehicle, the *hamsa,* and at left Brahma, youthful looking, four-headed, four-armed, also on a lotus placed atop a *hamsa.* Just outside of the carpet area at the right, a woman approaches the 'shrine', with offerings in a platter in her hand; a young boy placed horizontally on the picture, seems to be in the act of touching the ground with his forehead; at left, below Shiva's throne, are seen seated two men, wearing turbans with little projecting *kulahs,* lightly bearded, with what is possibly the figure of a small child in the lap of the man seated in front. It is possible that a 'family shrine', or at least one which is resorted to by the members of a pandit family, is shown here, the Gods in their heavens being brought in to underscore the majesty of the figures enthroned and to invoke their blessing.

The painting is richly coloured, the reds and yellows and purples, used in great profusion, making a strong impression. The background is now stained and disfigured, but in it one sees large expanses of an indigo blue which shares with an acid green the entire background. Quite remarkably, this green that ordinarily jars in other paintings seems to enhance this one: the blue, stained and inky, also seems to enrich the work.

While iconic images of deities are of common occurrence in Kashmiri work, the manner in which these two figures, large and frontal, are rendered side by side, and the fact that they are seen on the one hand as isolated images and, on the other as deities come to life, at least for the devotees—the two men, the standing women and the children—is of great interest . It is not common to see a 'domestic' scene of members of a family offering homage in a painting. The figures of the men and children and the lone woman are clearly recognisable as Kashmiri, the woman in particular, dressed in a long woollen gown, her middle secured by a scarf, a veil draped over her head and falling down to the ankles behind her, a small skull cap and jewellery adorning her head and face. The men are not dressed in the usual fashion of Kashmiri pandits as seen in paintings from Kashmir, with *kantopa* caps, but in turbans. However their affiliation is

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unmistakable, noticing as one does the prominent *tilak* marks placed on their foreheads. The painting has a broad border of dark purple, and a narrow black margin with minor floral work in white. Clearly, one sees this not as a leaf from some illustrated manuscript but as a separate, independent miniature.

The painter uses familiar Kashmiri conventions: the colours, the treatment of the lotuses, the drawing, the triangular full faces, the lack of obvious femininity in the Goddesses's figure, the exceedingly long bolsters placed behind the deities, are all there. The figures are rendered with self assurance and the painting acquires a distinct dignity and feeling. The figures of the devotees are competent, but the painter has not lavished too much attention upon them, as he has not on the figures that appear in the celestial sphere. The inspiration for a work like this may well have come from a Pahari painting, for the feeling and the atmosphere are reminiscent of that. However the flavour is recognisably Kashmiri.

The work may be dated c. 1900 A.D.

P. 21. THE ADORATION OF SADASHIVA
11.5 cm x 15.5 cm
Coll: Georgette Boner; Museum Rietberg, Zurich.
Acc. No. Rvi 1463

The form that we see here is Sadashiva, 'the highest and most comprehensive form of Shiva that allows itself to be imaged', in Stella Kramrisch's words. Five-headed, he sits here, cross-legged, on a double lotus, his back supported by a bolster, all arms spread out. The five heads of Shiva, each treated exactly in the same fashion, triangular, with a sharp point at the chin, three heads placed vertically, and two laterally, appear in an arrangement that seems to be a favourite of the Kashmiri painters. This pile of heads is not, as is common, surrounded by a nimbus but through an innovative device, a heap of lotus flowers being given the final touches by a Vishnu-Krishna like figure, blue-bodied, dressed in a yellow garment, wearing a crown. Shiva is dressed in a leopard-skin loin cloth, and a tiger skin draped over his body falling over the shoulders with one band coming directly across the chest. In the two hands he carries familiar objects, an axe or *parashu*, and a deer. There is a great deal of jewellery on the body, necklets, a pendant on the chest, long necklaces of gold and precious metals, armlets, and anklets, all adding to the effect. The expression on the face is gentle, mildly smiling, as if ready to receive the adorer, the devotee. The standing figure is difficult to identify specifically, except as a Vaishnava deity, Vishnu or Krishna, there are only two arms, suggestive more of Krishna than of Vishnu: he is surprisingly juxtaposed with the figure of Sadashiva, in an unequal capacity, more as an adorer and worshipper than as an equal as often seen in the syncretistic Harihara images. There is devotion in Krishna's gesture and even in his eyes as he leans forward slightly to arrange the lotuses around the many heads of Sadashiva.

It is unlikely that the painter here is availing of established iconography: this is probably an innovation of his as are certain other details. The lotus leaf of Sadashiva is not placed on a throne as is usually the case, but on the waters of a lake, possibly Manasarovar, that is associated with Shiva's Kailash. Interestingly, in the placid waters of the lake which occupies only a very small part of the painting at the bottom, lotus-leaves are seen in profusion, but no lotus flowers. The painter seems to have departed from the usual convention of showing blossoming lotuses in waters in order not to take away from the beauty and the effect of the large double lotus on which Shiva sits. The background is coloured a pale, muddy green, dotted by sprigs of grass and flowers; towards the very top a strip of blue sky is seen. The entire image is placed under an arch edged by a scalloped white line. On the spandrels and on the borders of the painting there are competently executed geometric and floral patterns, using for the most part

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gold and scarlet and orange. It is possible that the painting was once a folio in an illustrated manuscript of a Shaiva anthology of texts. It is now, however, mounted to look like a miniature. If the painting did indeed belong to a manuscript, the format is interesting, for it is vertical. But vertical, codex form manuscripts in Sharada and Devanagari of sacred texts are not unknown from Kashmir.

P. 22. GODDESS IN THE CREMATION GROUND
7.5 cm x 11 cm
Coll. Georgette Boner; Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Unpublished.

The folio is taken undoubtedly from an illustrated manuscript of a Tantric text. The image is familiar even though its rendering is not. The Goddess, dark-bodied, fangs protuding from the mouth, sits on a *shava*-corpse, in the cremation ground. Extraordinary utterances are associated with this theme. In the words of the *Saundarya-Lahiri* of Shankaracharya: "If Shiva is united with Shakti, he is able to exert his powers as Lord; if not, the God is not able to stir". In other words, Shiva without his *shakti* is no more than a *shava*. As Kramrisch says, these utterances contain a world view which has "a long past in Indian thought: according to the Hindu *Samkhya* philosophy, Purusha, the supreme principle, the cosmic spirit, is beyond action, while Prakriti the cosmic substance, is the active power, the Shakti that builds the substance of the world. In terms of the Shakta cult she is the supreme Goddess, she is all action whereas the immovable principle is the ground on which she sits and which she brings to life".

The supine figure here on which the Goddess sits—there is no direct contact, for the Goddess being what she is, is made by the painter to sit on a full blown lotus—is strongly reminiscent of Shiva himself, the fair complexion, the long matted hair, and the third eye on the forehead being suggestive of this, even if the other attributes are missing. If it is Shiva indeed, then the figure behind the Goddess, seated on a lotus, also cross-legged, adorned like her with a serpent around his neck, and also four-armed, long-locked, with a third eye open in the forehead, is somewhat difficult to explain. It is as if this is a male shadow of the Goddess, the deity reduced to powerlessness, all the *shakti* having been concentrated into herself by the form of the Goddess.

The pair is seen in a cremation ground, virtually the entire background of the painting consisting of brilliant, orange-coloured, spiky flames that rise, lapping the air, piercing the very sky with their sharp points. Jackals, denizens of the cremation ground, look expectantly at the Godess as they wait, one on either side of her.

The macabre scene is surrounded by a lively border, flowers and stems painted on a black ground. This, in itself, makes the painting move away from being a disturbing image. Everything is harmonised; it is destruction surrounded by beauty. Or so at least the painter seems to say here.

Most elements in the iconography of the Goddess are clear: the third eye, the protruding fangs, the bare, ashen body, the snake around the neck, the open hair falling at the back; what she holds in her front left hand, however, is not clear. It is possibly a conch-shell, associated in some ways with Vishnu, but also the receptacle of life-giving waters. Perhaps, she is in the act of sprinkling some water that she has taken from the shell on to the face of the corpse by which her divine powers, following the laws of destruction and creation and destruction again, shall soon rise to activity.

The drawing of the figures is summary and of a routine quality. The treatment of the fire on the other hand is quite remarkable; it is all consuming, meaningful, in this context filling virtually the whose page.

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P. 23. SWACHHANDA BHAIRAVA FORM OF SHIVA
20.3 cm x 13.6 cm
Private collection
Published, Kramrisch, *Manifestations of Shiva*, P. 11

Against an abstract, light orange coloured sky-space, streaked with broad lines of gold, a monumental looking image of Shiva, five headed, 18-armed, legs wide apart, stands on the hands of a Virabhadra attendant, who stands in turn upon a range of pink and purple coloured rocks that might represent the terrestrial world. The five heads, differently coloured, gold, red, blue and two shades of white, are arranged in a cruciform, three vertically and the other two laterally; they make up an enormous pile behind which an oval, gold coloured nimbus rises, topped in turn by a lotus-petalled *chhatra*. From under the *chhatra* and the matted locks of the top-most head, falls down, in a scalloped line, the stream of the Ganga. The body of Shiva is bare, except for a leopard skin wrapped around his loins and an elephant skin draped over his shoulders and falling in front. The adornment consists of a necklace and snake anklets. The arms fan out from the elbow on either side, and in each hand is carried a dread weapon of destruction: an upright sword, an axe, a *Vajra*, a bow, an arrow, a noose; also a *trishul* pointing downwards. Other objects that are immediately discernible in the hands are Shiva's favourite *damaru*, a skull, a cup, and a small banner. Not being able to provide a lotus seat for Shiva, as would have been common—for his feet rest on the outstretched hands of the *Vahana* figure—the painter brings in a large open petalled lotus behind Shiva, making a bold innovative pattern through this. The line of the lotus leaf is picked up in the curves of the nearly oval frame in which the main figure is placed, all around there is decoration with these, in gold and white. The spandrels above and below are filled with floral motifs; the miniature has borders that are reminisient of late Kangra work, five-petalled flowers in white and red with a thin stem connecting each with the next, painted against a black ground,

The *vahana* of Shiva in the painting is shown, like him, three-eyed, adorned by a serpent around the neck, dressed in skin. The upper part of the red-complexioned figure is covered partially by a leopard skin garment, unusual for males to wear, but seen quite frequently in *Ardhavarishwara* images from Kashmir in which the male half wears a *choli*-like garment. The lower limbs are covered with a tiger skin.

The pink-red background and the gold streaks across it are unusual, the painter almost certainly suggesting a space that is beyond the visible. A blue, indigo-coloured, sky would have thrown the image into sharp relief but, somehow, he uses this uncommon colour. The rocks at the bottom of the picture are, again, unusual; quite possibly, the painter is availing himself of some *dhyana* here that contains these iconographical prescriptions.

The colours in which the five heads of Shiva are painted are exactly those that appear on Sharada images. When one notices this and the third eye that appears both here and in the Sharada images, and the serpent encircling the neck and the shoulders of both, one begins to see a very close connection that seems to be peculiar to Kashmir. The strong convention of arms fanning out from the elbow, the drawing in purple, the unshaded frontal faces, all fit into a pattern. It is of interest to see how the feet both of Shiva and of his human *vahana* are joined to the 'wrong' legs, the right leg ending in a left foot, and the left leg in a right foot. Carelessness rather than design seems to be behind this. But, the image being iconic in character, it is unlikely that the devotee for whose meditation and concentration this was painted, would notice a detail such as this.

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P. 24. MATSYA, THE FISH INCARNATION OF VISHNU
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of prayer texts in Sanskrit
10.5 cm x 18 cm
Coll. Cyril and Methodius International Foundation for Art and Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria
Unpublished

The illustration belongs clearly to a series of ten that must have once constituted the *dasa-avatara* group in the manuscript. There are other images in the group, like those of Krishna and Arjuna in a chariot on the battlefield, and of the *Vishvarupa* of Krishna as revealed to Arjuna, since the *Bhagavadgita* is one of the principal exts included in the anthology. No text corresponding to the *avatara* painting is included but apparently the painter here was following a convention, since one knows of several manuscripts of anthologies in which the ten *avataras* are brought in as 'illustrations', to enrich and embellish a volume.

Matsya, the first of the incarnations, is rendered here in a spirited fashion. The struggle between the demon Shankhasura and Vishnu is all but over. The deity emerges from the mouth of the enormous fish whose body and tail curl up in a sweeping curve at the back and, placing his right foot on the waters, strikes a deadly blow to the demon with his mace. The demon, shown half-human, half-conchshell, turns and leans back, his enormous frame all but subdued, tongue lolling out of his cavernous mouth, his bushy moustache still defiant but his weapons, a shield and a mace, rendered useless in this contest that he has clearly lost. Behind him, close to the frame of the painting, appear four tiny forms, personifications of the Vedas, whose initial stealing and appropriation leads to this episode. The scene is set in the silvery waters of the ocean over the surface of which typical Kashmiri lotuses and leaves are evenly spread out. At the back, towards the right, a high red hill rises under the expanse of a light blue sky.

The figures of the two adversaries are rendered with flair and imagination. There is energy in the form of Vishnu, blue-complexioned, yellow *dhoti*-clad, four-armed, holding the *ayudhas*, as he steps out of the mouth of the great fish: but there is true flamboyance in the painter's rendering of the form of Shankhasura. The demon is rendered in copper-red colour and endowed with frightening strength of frame, his aggressive nature suggested most clearly through the arrogant, upward sweep of his bushy moustache. The rendering of the Vedas, as they look upon the battle from their insecure perch of a large lotus leaf, is different from the usual manner of showing them being pried out of the demon's ripped belly.

There is much in the painting that puts one readily in mind of Pahari models: the composition, and the figure of Vishnu especially contribute to that impression. The decorative margin, four-petalled flowers and gold leaves against a blackish ground, is strongly reminiscent also of Pahari work, but the principal work is Kashmiri. The quality of the line, the silvery treatment of water, the rendering of lotuses, the red hill rising in the background, leave one in no doubt about this. It is more than likely, as remarked earlier, that this admixture of the two elements, Pahari and Kashmiri, of the kind that is seen in this and other illustrations from this manuscript, was achieved at a centre like Jammu where Kashmiri painters could easily have had the opportunity, in the mid-nineteenth century, of seeing much Pahari work.

The broad red border surrounding the painting, as if it were a portfolio painting, was one of the many external features that Kashmiri painters picked up with ease from their Pahari counterparts.

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P. 25. KRISHNA STEALING THE GOPIS' CLOTHES
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagavadgita*
12.5 cm x 8.2 cm
Kurukshetra University Library, Kurukshetra
Acc. No. 52599
Unpublished.

One of the most celebrated and well loved episodes from the *Bhagavata Purana* is here incorporated among the set of illustrations provided in a text with a very different tenor and mood. Short as he must have found himself of themes to pick for illustrating the *Bhagavadgita,* the painter, almost out of habit, decided to include in this manuscript illustrations that went beyond the scope of the immediate text, but still refer to Vishnu and his ten incarnations, and then on to some of the most important episodes from the life of Krishna. Having treated of Krishna's being conveyed to Nanda and Yashoda soon after his birth, and of Krishna lifting the Mount Govardhan, here the painter visualizes the episode of the stealing of the clothes, *vastraharana.* The Yamuna here, in this painter's hand, becomes a flat, placid body of water, with lotuses blossoming in it; the tree that would ordinarily have appeared at the bank of the river in the midst of many others is placed squarely in the water, because that is where the centre of the painting is. Seated not in its branches but atop it, on the spread out, full-blown lotus flower that the Kashmiri painter is unable to resist, Krishna plays upon the flute, not looking at anyone in particular, as if it was the most natural thing in the world to be doing. On either side of him hang on low branches that are visible, garments, mostly *dhotis,* richly patterned, and gaily coloured, belonging to the six hapless *gopis* who are seen beseeching Krishna, each in her own manner. The two *gopis* at the left stand not in water, not even on the small flat area of undulating pink land, but beyond it, with hands folded in front of themselves, small *cholis* still clinging to their bodies, but bare for the most part. The two gopis who sit symmetrically on either side of the trunk of the tree, in the water, but really seem almost floating above it, are again wearing cholis, but are bare in the lower part of the body. They are not approaching Krishna for the return of their clothes but looking at each other, as if in consultation. The two gopis who stand at the extreme right, one of them completely bare bodied and the other one wearing a *choli,* extend their hands towards Krishna while the one partially dressed looks back at her companion and puts a reassuring arm around her neck as if to say that this is but a prank and will soon be over. The pattern is vivid, the composition convincing, the attitudes of the gopis much as one would expect them: veering towards beseechment, mixing disbelief and embarassment. The background for the most part is painted grey-green behind which on either side are seen in spray form the crowns of trees. The planes rise still higher as patches of red appear on either side flanking a large curve in the middle that goes beyond the bands of the top border and in its curve picks up the rhythm of the tree in which Krishna sits.

It is not common at all in Kashmiri painting to come across undraped women's bodies, and the painting acquires a special interest on account of that. There is no graphic description of the nudity of the young women, but no great abashment either. By showing five of the six gopis dressed in *cholis,* the painter still succeeds in avoiding showing the women's breasts. The breasts of the one who does not have *choli* on are also concealed from view by the arm that her companion brings around her neck and over her chest. The forms are rendered simply but not too unconvincingly.

It is not unlikely that the painter of this leaf, like that of others in this manuscript, had access to Pahari work and was in part inspired by it. But the treatment remains resolutely Kashmiri: consider the figuration, the freedom with which the elements are treated in the composition, the conventions followed, and

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especially the colouring which is uncompromingly bright. The floral border, a deep blue with four petalled flowers and creepers in gold and orange filling the spaces, certainly owes much to Pahari models. The caption, in Devanagari characters, briefly on top left shows poor acquaintance with the Hindi language, for it reads '*Vastrachur*', (the stealing of the clothes) where it really should have read as '*vastra chora*'.

P. 26. THE GODDESS SHARADA ENTHRONED
Gouache on paper
22 cm x 18 cm
Private collection
Unpublished.

At first sight the painting appears rather rough and heavy. It is possessed, however, of a certain monumentality: static, iconic, perhaps precisely of the kind that meant something to the devotee for whom it was painted. Images of this kind, painted late into the nineteenth century, were apparently kept in homes as icons to be worshipped, sometimes placed in glass frames and displayed in a private area. The purplish border with its double white rules, now stained as is the rather hastily executed margin around the image, with rather casually drawn floral and geometric work in white and red against a black ground. But the image itself is for the most part intact. It shows the Goddess Sharada, recipient of such adoration in Kashmir, seated crosslegged on a double lotus, resting against a huge bolster that covers the great lotus from end to end and goes beyond it. The Goddess is shown, following a strict iconographic prescription, five headed; these heads are differently coloured, the central one being of 'gold'. and those flanking it in red and blue and different shades of white. The central head is seen full-faced and the others in three quarters. All of them are grouped together under a seven-pointed crown that sits on their heads jointly and glistens against an enormous *pipal* leaf shaped nimbus that is flattened and enlarged to be able to accommodate all the five heads. From the nimbus, golden rays emerge. Lower down, the Goddess with her elongated torso, arms fanning out, holds a *trishula*, an *ankusha*, a *pasha*, a *shankha*, a *chakra*, a decapitated head, and two full bloomed lotuses. Out of the ten, the remaining two arms are brought by the Goddess across her chest and crossed. The lotuses are so placed as to appear like the sun and the moon on either side of the Goddess, perhaps deliberately so, glistening as they do in their circular orbs against the indigo ground painted behind the Goddess. The heads, the body, the arms, are richly bejewelled, a profusion of pearl and golden necklaces and earrings adorning the form. On each of the heads is a third eye, vertically placed on the forehead, clearly marked. The dress that the Goddess wears is rather summary, a very short *choli* that barely covers the shoulders and comes straight across the body, a *dhoti* that is tied rather low down with its ends spreading out in front and concealing the crossed feet of the Goddess. Below the double lotus, which is essentially the Goddess's seat, but not really bearing her weight, is her *vahana*, shown here with a very pointed beak and decorative wings and tail. At either side stand devotees, at the left a pandit, wearing a *dhoti* and *kantopa* cap, at the right, a lady, perhaps his wife, dressed in a skirt and a veil which covers the upper part of her body and the back of her head. The ground is carpeted, red with diamond and floral patterns on it; towards the top a rounded arch with spandrels painted in orange, and a light mauve. A curtain parts to reveal the form of the deity.

There is an attempt at ornamentation, but patterns on textiles and on the indigo blue back-ground are essentially confined to large gold spots. They are there everywhere, on the bolster, the back-ground, the *dhoti* of the Goddess, her *choli*, the pandit's short *dhoti*, the lady's skirt and veil. It is only on the carpet or the terrace that the painter brings in a different ornamental design. The colours

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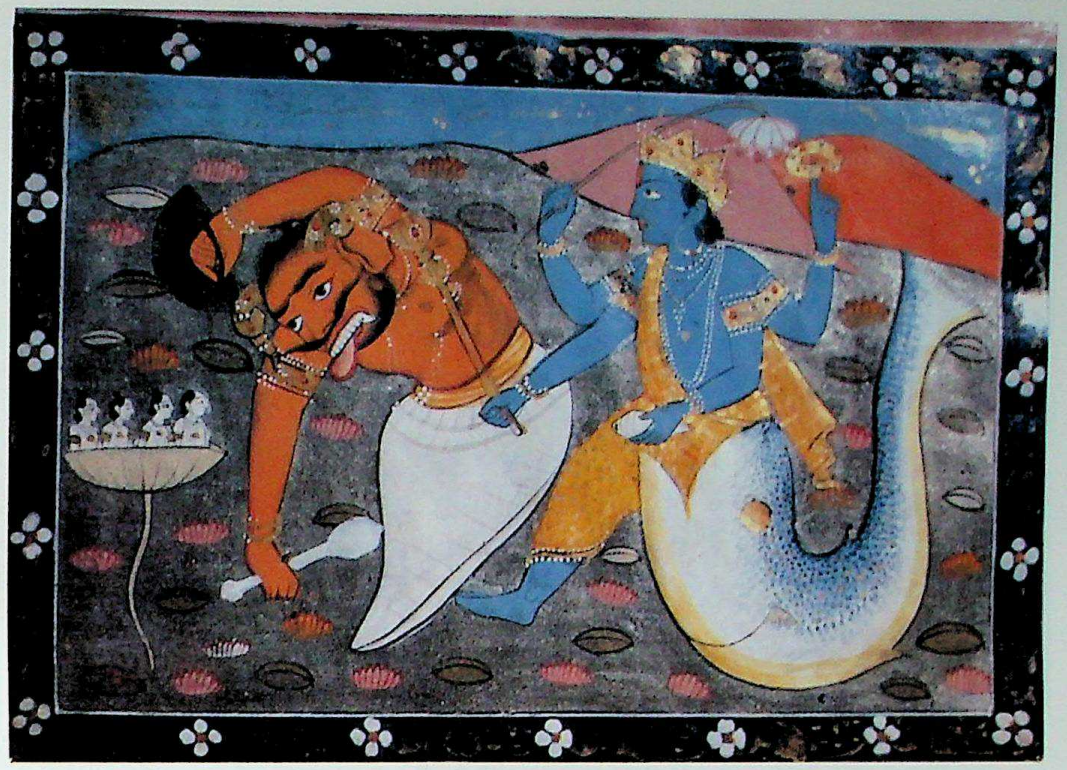
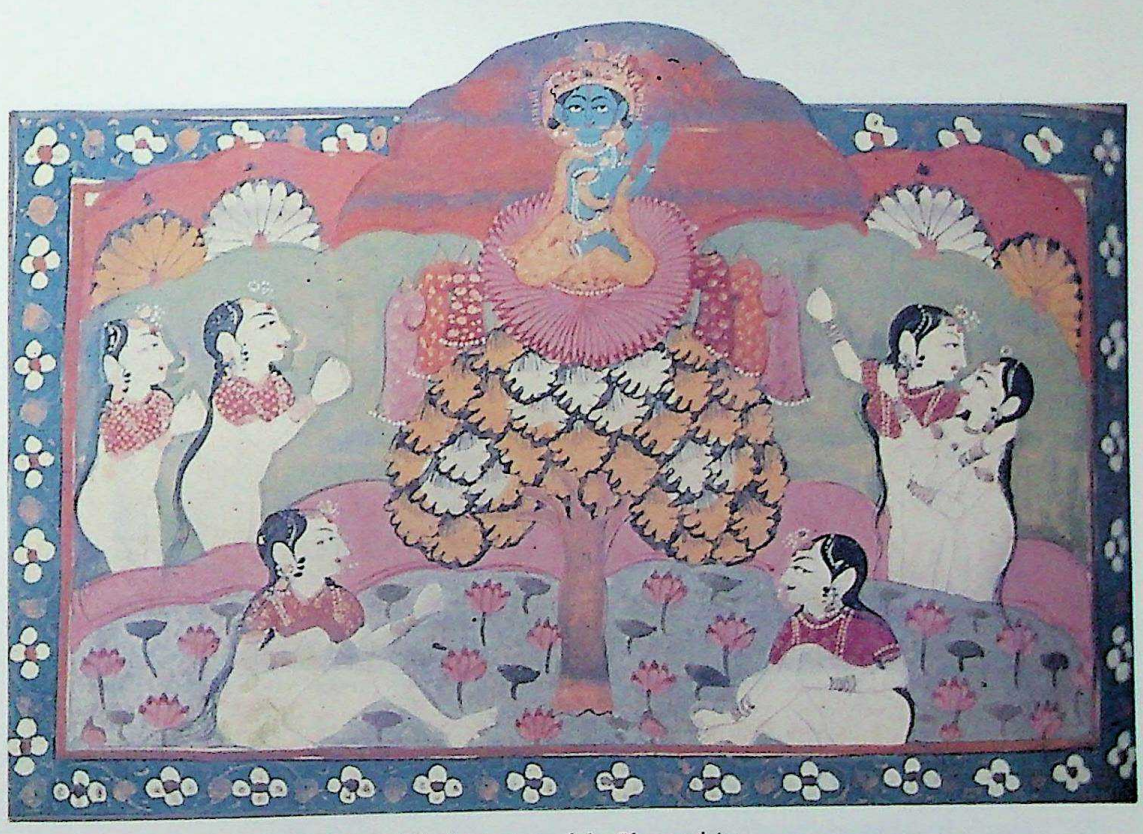


P24. Matsya: the Fish Incarnation of Vishnu: folio from a ms. of prayer texts.



P25. Krishna stealing the gopis' clothes: folio from a ms. of the *Bhagavadgita*.

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P26. The Goddess Sharada enthroned.

P27. Vishnupada, the Sacred Feet of Vishnu.

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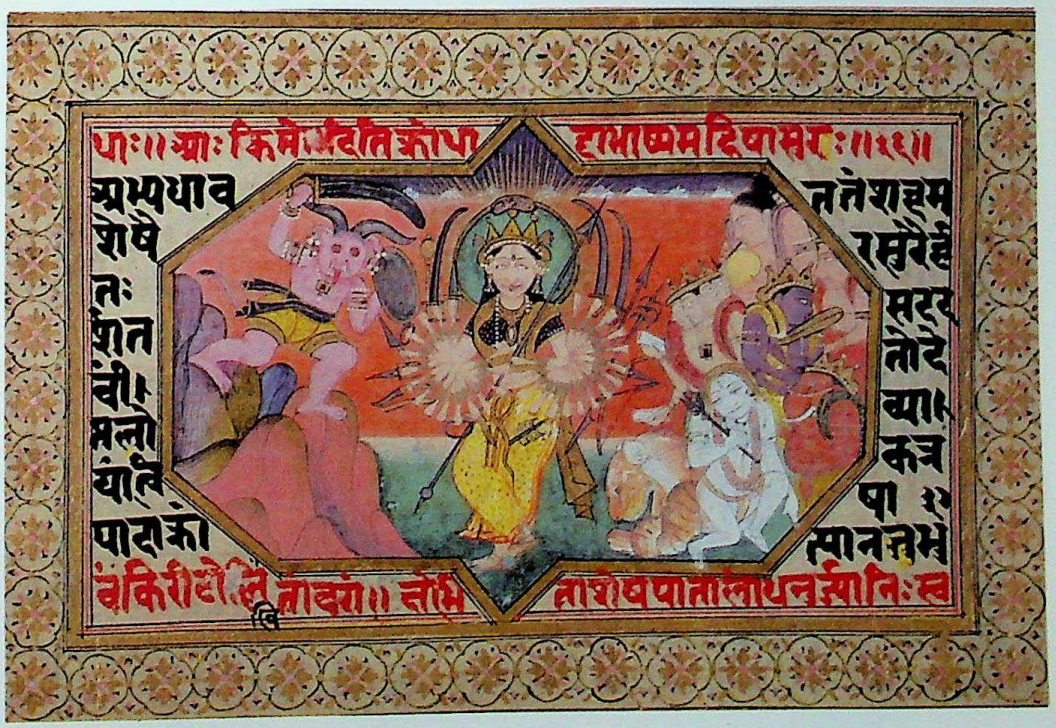
P28. Ganesha and Saraswati enthroned: folio from a ms. of prayer texts.



P29. The Emergence of the Goddess as a Pile of Light: folio from a ms. of the *Devi Mahatmya*.

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P30. Vishwarupa, the Cosmic Form of Vishnu.

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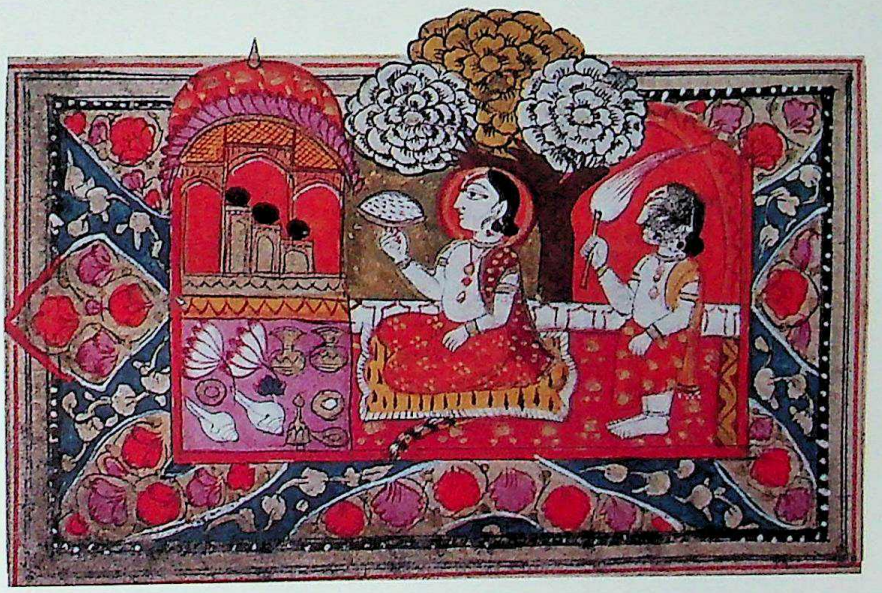
P31. Fragment of a *dhyana* scroll.



P32. Adoration of Shaligrama: folio from an unidentified ms.

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P33. Vishnu and Lakshmi seated: folio from a ms. of sacred texts in Sanskrit.

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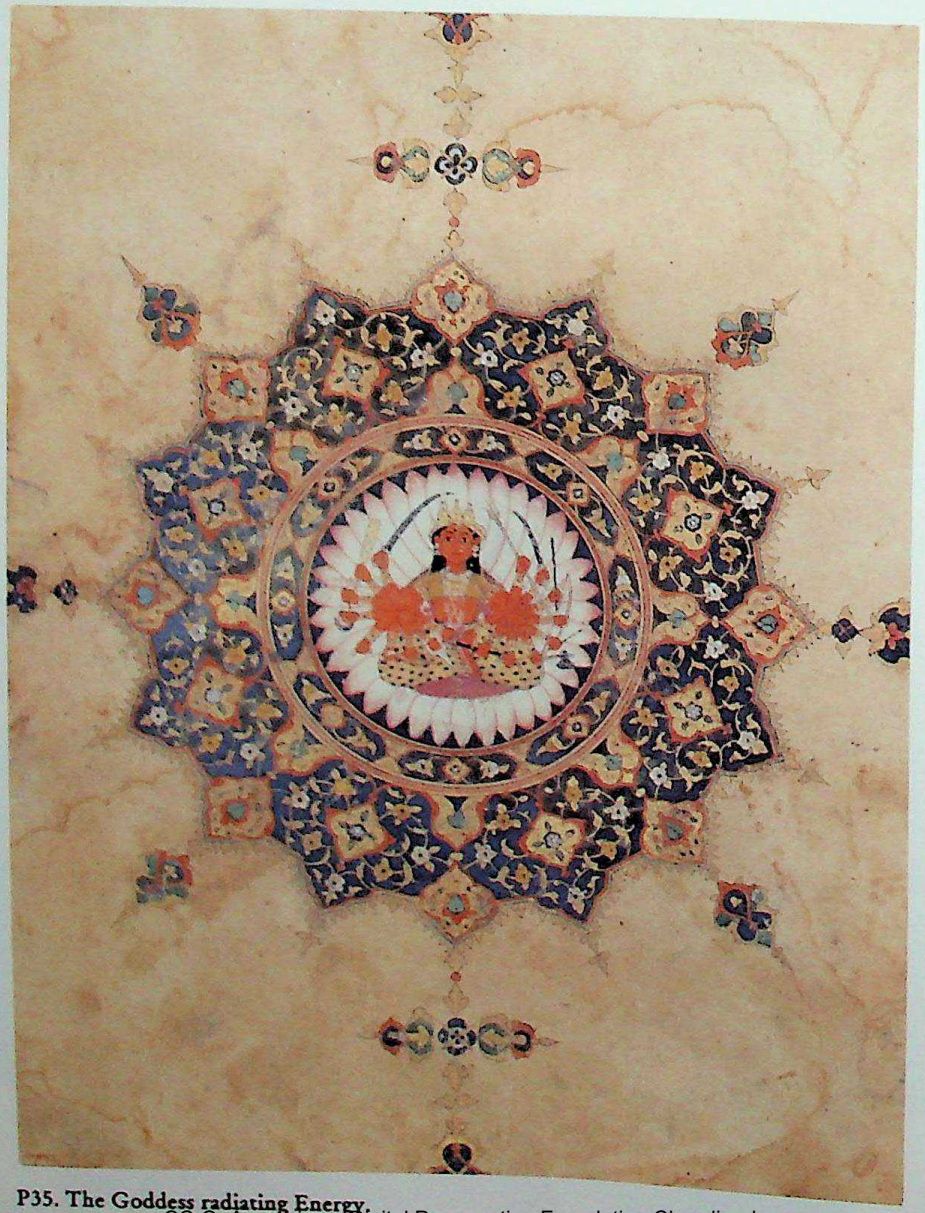
P34. Vishnu on Shesha.



P35. The Goddess radiating Energy.

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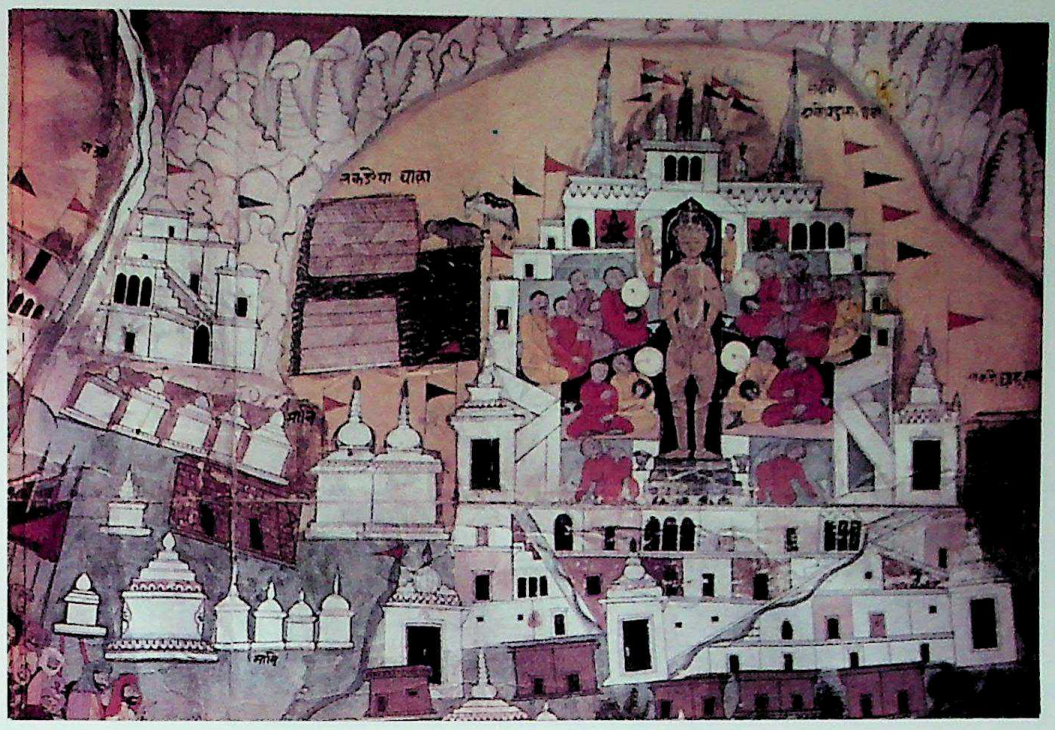
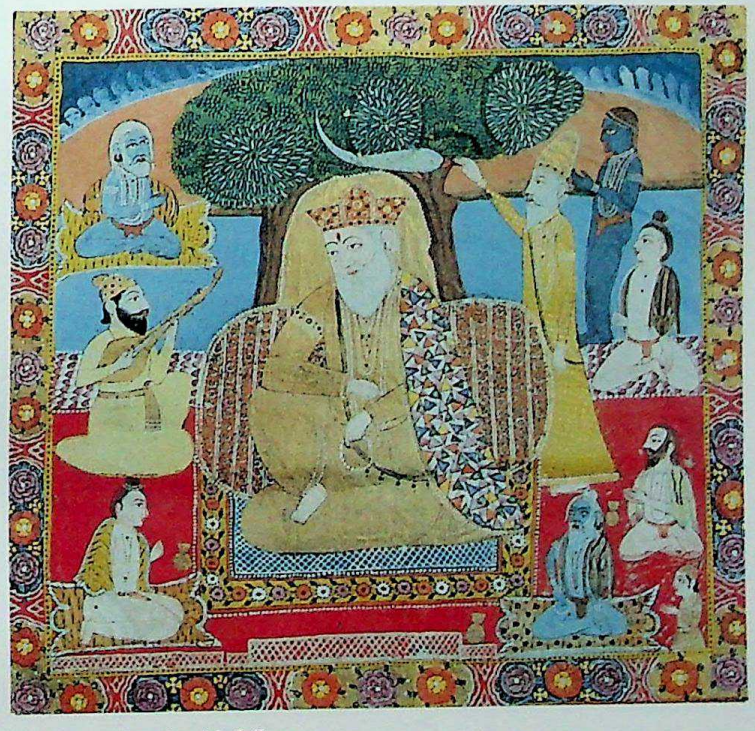


P36. A Buddhist Shrine: detail from a painted scroll.



P37. Guru Nanak with followers.

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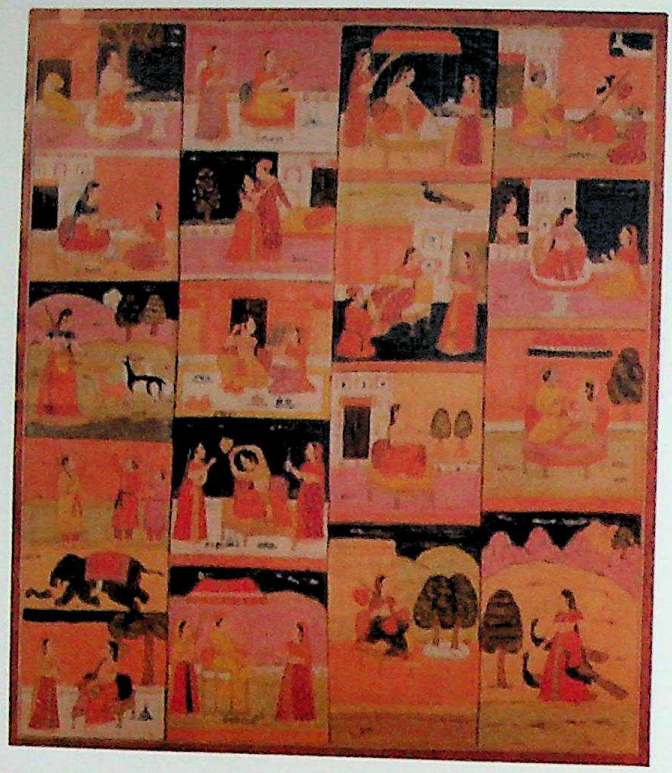

P38. A *Ragamala* leaf: folio from an unidentified ms.

P39. Leaf from an artist's sketch-book.

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used are strong and vivid: the indigo-blue setting, the orange-red of the nimbus, the bolster, and the *dhoti* of the Goddess. The lotuses are rather delicately painted, much pink and purple having been eschewed, only the outlines being lightly tinted.

The drawing shows to best advantage in the delineation of the heads of the Goddess, The arms, fanning out not quite from the elbow, as is usual in Kashmiri work, but from slightly behind the shoulder, appear a little stiff and too schematic. So do the hands of the devotee figures. But very litle attention goes eventually to these details for the eye rests, as it is meant to, on the central image. An icon is what the painter had set out to paint.

P. 27. VISHNUPADA: THE SACRED FEET OF VISHNU
10.3 cm x 13.5 cm
Private Collection: Philadelphia
Unpublished.

Vishnu's sacred feet—celebrated in texts, objects of fervent adoration, soles densely packed with auspicious symbols with a myriad associations, and significance—are painted here by the artist: highly stylised, seen vertically, all toes carefully spread out, surrounded by elaborate, joyous looking floral ornamentation. Meant obviously to be seen in a pair, one folio shows only one foot, the other foot having a seperate folio devoted to it. In the pair of feet, seventeen symbols and objects are brought in on each foot. It is easy to recognise a flowing stream, a conch shell, a fish, the moon, a serpent, the *Srichakra*, a triangle, a mace, a woman's figure, possibly Lakshmi, full-faced with a *shankha* and a *chakra* in her hands, a rectangle with nine compartments, an unidentified object, possibly a heap of rice, and a *Sripada*. On the companion foot, the left one, are objects that are to be seen in conjunction with these: a chariot drawn by horses, and figures seated in meditation, a head, perhaps of Rahu, a *veena*, a lotus-flower, a small shrine, an *ankusha*, the *parijata* tree, a *chhatra*, a flag, a crown, a barley grain and an *urdhva-rekha* that comes from the top of the big toe down to the middle of the heel at the bottom. Like the other foot this too is placed inside a frame: the border, the background, all filled with blossoming lotuses, buds and leaves and stems, making for a vivid pattern.

The feet are coloured a deep pink and have a thick outline that evenly goes around the contours in dark purple. While the Kashmiri painter's favourite colour is recognisable through this, it is certainly a matter of surprise that Vishnu's feet are not rendered in the usual *shyama*, bluish-black complexion, that is associated with him.

Two other paintings, obviously companions to these two, show the sacred hands of Vishnu. Clearly a scheme seems to have been at work in the painter's mind. While paintings of Vishnupada's are quite common, the sacred hands are not as frequently painted. The four folios together, painted in the horizontal format, may well have once belonged to a Vaishnava manuscript from which they are now detached.

Texts distinguish between various 'Vishnupadas', for not only the feet of Vishnu, but those of Rama-Sita and others in the Vaishnava pantheon, are described at length, the number of objects and their combination on the feet varying. It is possible to have feet with as many as sixty-four emblems and auspicious signs on them, and as few as sixteen on the two feet together. It is not easy to determine the textual authority or reference on which this pair of feet and hands are based. However, there is complete familiarity with the iconographies of various objects. The painter proceeds to render objects as economically and as tersely as possible to be able to fit them on to the feet. The figuration is characteristic of Kashmiri work: frontal faces, the treatment of the horses, of the lotus, the trees etc. are all very familiar. The work, however, departs from the routine in the conviction that it seems to carry. There is no intent to produce a

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decorative, pleasing design: it is icons that the painter paints here. The lotuses in the frame and the border around the feet do not merely adorn a surface; they enhance the effect.

P. 28. GANESHA AND SARASWATI ENTHRONED
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of prayer texts
Collection: Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Acc. No. RVI-1816
Published in a museum poster

Following the time-honoured convention of opening sacred texts with invocations to Ganesha and to Saraswati, this manuscript features this finely painted leaf as a frontispiece. Inside the frame provided by elaborate arabesque work in lapis and gold, painted next to each other are the images of the deities who preside over enterprises of all kinds: Ganesha and his consort at right, Saraswati at left. A terrace is the setting, with a small balustrade at the back: there are stylised canopies above, not supported by any logically placed poles, that of Ganesha more elaborate than that of Saraswati. The 'gabled' canopy above Ganesha is sufficiently high for his massive head to be fitted under it. There are no thrones, but double-lotus seats appear below the deities who in turn rest lightly on their *vahanas*, a pair of rats serving Ganesha and a *hamsa* beneath Saraswati. Ganesha is shown as red of complexion, *mahakaya*, large and towering, four-armed, with the objects traditionally associated with him—axe, rod, rosary or *akshamala*, and a platter full of sweetmeats—shown in the hands. In his expansive lap sits his consort, hands folded. The bodies of both the deities are richly ornamented; pearl strands, gold necklaces, anklets and wristlets prominently shown; the most prominent of Ganesha's adornments is, of course, a serpent that is encircled around his neck and raises his hood as if to parallel the curve taken by Ganesha's enormous trunk.

Saraswati, facing him, is shown with two hands disposed as if she were reciting or singing; like Ganesha, she is supported by a large bolster behind her; she sits cross-legged, one foot daintily showing from under the skirt that she wears. In the two hands that are not engaged in gesturing, she holds a sacred text, with some words in Sharada roughly written on them, and a light, double-gourded *vina*. Like Ganesha, she wears a prominent golden crown with a bejewelled *sarpesh* stuck in it; there is a great deal of ornaments that she wears: on the head, in the ears, on her body, wrists and fingers. Her *choli* is like that of Ganesha's consort of scarlet colour, painted, like the rest of the textiles in the painting, with large golden spots. The *choli* is high, leaving a great part of the midriff bare; a skirt in orange-red, also spotted with gold, covers the lower part of her body.

A veil is draped diagonally across the front of her upper part and falls behind her. Her face, like that of Ganesha, is rendered by the painter in three quarters, since the two are almost seen turning towards each other, as if in conversation; only the face of Ganesha's consort is in true profile. The images are surrounded by rich arabesques and fillet illumination in gold and lapis.

P. 29. THE EMERGENCE OF THE GODDESS AS A PILE OF LIGHT.
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Devi-Mahatmya*
12.5 cm x 19 cm
Collection: Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Acc. No: 1633-1667
Published; Karuna Goswamy, *The Glory of the Great Goddess*, Zurich, 1988.

The sumptuous manuscript from which this folio comes is filled with illustrations that capture the very essence of the eloquent, resounding words of the text of the *Devi-Mahatmya* from the *Markandeya Purana*. The text and the illustrator have built up the story of the Goddess as it is narrated by the sage to the king Suratha,

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and the vaishya, Samadhi, both engaged in their search for answers in this world. It is from the sage that they hear of the illusion-removing *charitra* of the great Goddess, and how she contains within herself the esssence of the powers of all the forces of good, in the ever-raging battle between the gods and the demons, between the powers of light and of darkness.

At one point as the sage narrates the story, Mahishasura the mighty buffalo-headed demon defeats the divine armies. The gods despair, for they are unable to meet the challenge of the hordes of the demons. They appeal to Shiva and to Vishnu. Hearing of the power of the demon-chief, as the text says, the faces of the great gods become filled with indignation and a steady, fierce heat springs from them. To this is added the lustre of the bodies of the lesser gods, and from all this together arises a pile of light, blazing like a mountain whose flames fill the whole space. This *jyoti punj*-light then turns into a woman enveloping the three worlds by her radiance'. Her face was produced from the light of Shiva, her hair from that of Yama and her triple eyes from the light of Agni. Her eyebrows were the twin twilight, as the text says with eloquence. Here, set decoratively in the middle of the text of the page, as on all the illustrated leaves of this manuscript, this moment is captured by the artist.

The Goddess stands, composed, radiant, full of energy. Thirty-two arms spread out, sixteen on either side, each carrying a weapon of destruction: swords, daggers, spears, *vajra,* bow, arrow and, mace among others. But this war-like aspect seems not to be reflected in the least bit on the still, slightly smiling face of the Goddess as she stands, luxuriantly at ease, one leg crossed in front of the other, looking the devotee, the reader of the text, straight in the face. Behind her elegantly crowned, bejewelled head, a jade-green, circular nimbus spreads out: and from this rays emanate in all directions, crossing the line of the horizon, and rising into the very skies.

As the painter places her, she separates the two worlds: to the left is the demon Mahishasura, buffalo headed, full of menace, coming rushing down from mountain tops, sword and rock in hand; on the right the gods appear, disheartened, cowering: Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Ganesha, Narada among them. From the middle, the Goddess's tiger turns back and bends his head, even as he crosses his forepaws in homage to his mistress.

The ground is painted a light green turning into pale yellow towards the top; the background is a carmine red, filling the entire space except for a very narrow band of blue at the top; the sky is dotted with scalloped, waterless white clouds. In rendering this, the Kashmiri painter departs somewhat from his usual colour scheme, or at least from the manner in which he applies the colours. The rocks at the left, pink, orange, grey, and blue, are bare and are distantly derived from Persian prototypes. The figuration of the gods and to an extent of the great Goddess, owes something to the influence of the Pahari painters. The treatment of the arms of the Goddess, however, remains, emphatically Kashmiri, as does the painted border around the text, in stylised circles with gold and red patterning in the shape of flowers and stems against a beige background.

P. 30. VISHWARUPA, THE COSMIC FORM OF VISHNU
27 cm x 16 cm
Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Acc. No. RVI 1459
Unpublished.

On a relatively small sheet of paper, the painter here conjures up a monumental image. The inspiration comes quite clearly from the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgita,* but departing dramatically from the usual renderings of the Vishwarupa in illustrated manuscripts of the great text, where all the emphasis shifts only to the multiplicity and variety of heads, even as Krishna continues to

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remain seated, the painter here takes upon himself to interpret within the space available, and using all his energies, the greatness of the vision seen by Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. Enclosed within a high, curving line, at the top circle of fire stands Vishnu, a massive group of heads rendered in four different colours. One can count as many as fifty-eight heads topping a form of which neither the torso nor the lower part of the body are 'human' looking. The torso is completely covered by multicoloured strands of matted locks that descend from the head and come down to where the waist ought to be: locks that now look like tongues of fire, now strands of rope. The lower limbs, thighs, knees, legs, are all made up of mountain tops, tree-forms, rising steadily towards the waist; there is no separation of the legs, it being one solid mass, and where the feet ought to be there is a colossal congregation of stripes of different colours ending towards the ground, diagonally, suggestive of hundreds of legs covered with long leather boots. The area of the arms, however, is treated with a certain degree of 'naturalism', myriads of these sprouting from the elbows, fanning out on either side. As many as forty-six arms can be counted each carrying a weapon, a symbol: swords, axes, arrows, bows, maces, discuses, daggers, rods of all kinds, figure here, each one of them painted a shade of white to stand out sharply against the slate gray ground and apart from the mauve-blue arms which carry them. Against the chest, close to some of the arms which are brought against the body, are little heads of divinities, sages, mortals, sticking out from behind the streaming locks of matted hair. Each of the heads has a third eye opening on the forehead; the vertical column of heads in the centre, differently coloured like the rest—slate-gray, gold, red etc.—sprouts fangs, but the other heads that are seen in profile, spreading out laterally, have a calmer expression and aspect. The painter sets out here, undoubtedly, to provide visual parallels to the descriptions in the texts, Vishnu-Krishna describing himself as possessed of a thousand eyes, a thousand arms, a thousand feet, destroying time, crunching beings between his teeth, encompassing space.

On either side of the great figure of Vishnu, stand some animals, an elephant, a horse, a cow, a mountain goat. But also at the right is Arjuna, hands folded and, at left, a woman, difficult to identify; close to the feet are two other figures one seen seated.

It is an awesome, majestic image that the painter brings in here. There is ambition in his vision, and much energy. It is unlikely that he had access to any models. Prototypes of the usual small Kashmiri illustrations certainly could not have suggested this form. It is clearly a case of an individual painter being fired by the majesty and the eloquence of the text of the *Bhagavadgita*. It is difficult to guess as to whether this folio belongs to any illustrated manuscript. The measurements do not rule that possibility out but no parallel or related works have come to light yet.

P. 31. FRAGMENT OF A *DHYANA* SCROLL
18 cm x 16 cm .
Collection: Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Acc. no. RVI 1016
Unpublished

What must have once been a magnificant, rich scroll has now, unfortunately, been split into parts; only fragments are now available. It is not easy to reconstruct from them the form that the entire scroll might have taken, nor is it possible exactly to identify the function that it was meant to fulfill. But on it there are enough *shlokas* in Sanskrit, involving deities described with passion and eloquence, for one to guess that the scroll in the original was meant to be recited from and preserved as an aid in meditation. The text is spread over the surviving fragments, written in extremely precise Devanagari characters. There are spaces

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between the texts, filled with extremely rich decorative motifs which perhaps have a meaning that cannot be fully reconstructed. At one point just a plain lotus flower, exquisitely painted, is placed between segments of the text. Here what initially seems to be a stylised version of a lotus surrounded by simple ornamental patterns made by other four petalled flowers, turns out to be essentially an armlet made in this pattern. This is evident from the two small gold pieces on either side to which gold and black tassels are attached, making a pattern that one has to strive to link with the principal object in the middle. The ground, except for the areas where the script is written, is completely filled with superbly rendered floral patterns in pure gold, the sheet glistening with remarkable effect when moved. The jewelled ornament, based on the shape of the flowers, is again exquisitely crafted, at its heart a lateral oval, dark shape edged by a steadily drawn broad gold line from which curling petals of the flowers take over and spread in all directions.

The text directly above this pattern speaks of the ninth day of the month and of a horoscope. The line directly below the ornament speaks of Rama and Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. The ninth being the day of the month on which Rama was born—Ram Navami, still a widely celebrated festival—one gets the feeling that this scroll was conceived as an imaginary horoscope of Rama. In any case, it is in celebration of him.

These fragments were acquired, according to information available, in Benaras. They were also perhaps scripted and painted in Benaras. One can assume that itinirent Kashmiri painters were responsible for the highly accomplished illumination on the scroll. The work is very distinctly Kashmiri, even if the subject it treats of, one has not come upon before in Kashmiri work.

P. 32. ADORATION OF *SHALIGRAMA*
Folio from an unidentified manuscript
12.5 cm x 18 cm
Private collection
Unpublished

A princely person bare in the upper part of the body, bare-headed, clad only in a *dhoti* and an *angavastra,* sits in the middle of the painting, on a tiger skin, holding aloft a platter with offerings. The object of his adoration is a group of the sacred *shaligrama*-stones, each placed atop a squat, golden 'pillar', under a canopy. In front of the devotee, placed upon the ground, are ritual instruments and offerings: two full-blown lotuses, golden platters and receptacles of water, two conch-shells, a flat stone possibly for grinding *chandana* paste. Behind the devotee stands an attendant, *chauri* in hand, also bare in the upper part of the body. In the centre, from behind the carpeted terrace on which the principal figure sits, rises a large tree, its crown rendered in a highly stylized fashion, three different circular, decorative clusters of leaves lightly resting upon the trunk. While the presence of the tree suggests an outdoor setting, the canopy raised over the *shaligrama*-stones points to a shrine in the interior, a suggestion further emphasized by the slight curve at the right top frame of the painting. Perhaps a palace courtyard is what the painter is suggesting here. The painting is surrounded by illumination on three sides, suggesting its being a folio from a manuscript, and not a portfolio leaf. As often seen in Kashmiri manuscript leaves, the painted area cuts across the border at the top.

What poses a slight puzzle in respect of the identification of the figure is the nimbus behind the head of the devotee. This feature often adorns both divine and royal figures, but here its significance does not become immediately clear. For a divine figure to be thus shown at prayers in front of *shaligrama*-stones would be very unusual; at the same time if it is a royal figure that we see here, ordinarily in the humble act of praying a nimbus would be eschewed by the painter. It is to be noticed that both the figures, the principal devotee and the

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attendant, wear prominent Vaishnava *tilak*-marks. The hair is worn long by both persons, and ends in curls at the nape of the neck.

As stated, the person shown in the painting is somewhat difficult to identify. If the devotee is indeed a princely figure, one thinks of someone from the royal house of Jammu, from Gulab Singh downwards, which was especially devoteed to *shaligramas.* The famous Raghunath temple at Jammu with its enormous store of *shaligramas,* inside the temple, comes to the mind. The figure could also, possibly, be that of a sage, like Shukdeva, or Narada, shown at prayers.

The illumination in arabesques around the painting is of a rather poor quality, only a faint memory of much finer work being preserved in its patterning. The painting itself, however, is rich and lively. The colours are familiar: orange-red, yellow, green, purple and pink, but their appliçation is fine and the appearence one of saturation. In the background, on either side of the tree, areas of red and moss-green appear; then where the shrine takes over, the background again is rendered a rich red. The densely patterned circles of leaves on the tree are differently coloured, two of them light in colour, and the central one a dark-greenish yellow.

Considering that the devotee is a Hindu, one notices that the manner of his sitting is rather unusual, for the legs are not crossed in front, but tucked under. The devotee himself, with his long locks, a thick mass of black, set against the red circle of the nimbus, brings to the mind, in some ways, images of the Goswamis of Nathadwara in Rajasthan. But it is extremely unlikely that it is a Rajasthani figure that we have in this painting.

P. 33. VISHNU AND LAKSHMI SEATED
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of a sacred text in Sanskrit
12 cm (maximum width)
Coll. Himachal Pradesh State Museum, Shimla
Acc. No. 77.35
Unpublished.

This fragment of a folio undoubtedly belongs to a manuscript of a Sanskrit text devoted to Vishnu. In the absence of any other leaves of the manuscript having survived, and considering that even this leaf is not intact—only the innermost part of it is now preserved—it is not possible to identify the text. However, the occurrence of words like *'Bhagavata', 'Madhava', 'yata kripata'.* leave very little doubt about the affiliation of the manuscript. The presence of Vishnu and Lakshmi in the heart of the page places the matter beyond argument.

This might well have been the opening folio of a text considering the lavish manner in which the fragments of lines on it are written, succeeding lines being scripted in gold, red and black, like we see on so many illuminated and illustrated manuscripts containing prayer texts.

The painting is set like a medallion in the heart of the text. A rough star-shaped cartouche is what the medallion looks like, with sharply pointed ends on all four sides and curving lines dipping in the middle joining those points. The outline is in gold. However, one notices that just outside of the medallion there are other, rough lines following the same outline drawn in vermilion. These might well be the calligrapher's indication of the place to be left blank and to be filled subsequently with the painting inside the medallion.

The painting itself is quite delicate, showing Vishnu, four-armed, blue-complexioned, clad in yellow garments, wearing a crown with peacock feathers, holding in his hands the four *ayudhas, shankha, chakra, gada* and *padma,* seated on a low *chauki.* By his side is his divine consort, Lakshmi, dressed in a golden *choli* and veil, worn with a finely-patterned skirt in scarlet red. Behind the couple is seen a bolster. The *chauki* on which the two are seated is covered with a large, full blown lotus that essentially serves as the true seat of Vishnu and Lakshmi.

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In the background, in the centre of the space available, is a narrow white, band, suggestive of a marble balustrade. It splits the painting exactly into two parts: above it the background is a flat orange; below it, a jade green; behind the balustrade a few flowers, mostly rendered in purple and mauve, rise towards the left of the painting.

The general aspect of the two figures is distinctly Pahari. There are numerous images of Vishnu and Lakshmi, or Radha and Krishna, that the pair here reminds one of. However the possibility of a Kashmiri hand being involved in the work cannot be ruled out. The strong orange-coloured background in the upper part of the painting, the distinct preference for purples and mauves in the rendering of the lotus-seat, the lotus held by Vishnu in one of his hands, and the flowers at the back, all support this possibility. The line, in some ways, is different from, although closely related to, that used in Pahari paintings of a late date. If this is indeed the work of a Kashmiri painter imitating a Pahari work, the achievement is impressive. For the little painting has a delicacy about it which sets it apart from the usual run of Kashmiri paintings. The calligraphy and the gold work on the page are, in any case, undoubtedly in a Kashmiri hand.

P. 34. VISHNU ON SHESHA
13 cm x 18.5 cm
Private collection
Unpublished.

At first sight, this would seem to be a Pahari painting of the middle of the nineteenth century, harking back in its style to much finer work done three-quarters of a century earlier. Familiar in composition and theme, arranged and mounted on a *wasli*, it suggests a portfolio work. However, a second look establishes that this is an adaptation of a Pahari work by a Kashmiri artist. There are far too many elements in the painting for one to be able to state the opposite.

The great serpent, *Shesha*, with its many hoods and sweeping tail, is seen here stpeading its body out on placid waters serving as the great Vishnu's couch. Vishnu lies, relaxed, the lower part of the body fully stretched, back slightly raised and supported by a cushion and a bolster; Lakshmi holds the Lord's left-foot in her hand and massages it. In two of Vishnu's hands are a discus and a large lotus flower; the other two *ayudhas*, the mace and the conch-shell, lie close to his stretched leg. From his navel issues forth the great world-lotus in the heart of which Brahma is seen seated, four-armed, four headed, carrying the Vedas in his hands. At a slight distance towards the top, standing on a curved green strip of earth, is Shiva, body slightly bending forward, wearing only a *dhoti* around his loins: from his matted locks the stream of the Ganga pours forth and falls straight on to the area just behind the great *Shesha* serpent, presumably into the waters of the endless ocean. Behind him, in the corner is painted a grey-blue sky with rough stripes across it. The rest of the ground above the waters is painted a flat orange-red. It is against this that the many hoods of Shesha which spread to form a canopy over Vishnu's head, and the usual figure of Brahma on his lotus-seat, appear in sharp relief.

The colouring of the work is unmistakably Kashmiri. The red of the ground, the scarlet and purples in the bolster, in the dress of Lakshmi, the mauve and pink of the lotus flowers, the sharp green of the curve of the earth towards the very top at right, the indigo-blue used rather decoratively on the edges of the body of Shesha and, to an extent, the blue used for the body of Vishnu, are all distinctly Kashmiri. The distribution of the colours is again markedly Kashmiri in character judging from the flat manner in which the red-orange background is laid; the juxtapostion of the scarlet-red of the cushions and the upper garment of Lakshmi with the orange of the background and the white of the body of Shesha, the surprising and bold introduction of the green curve at the top-right, also suggest

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this. The two right-arms of Vishnu are rendered somewhat differently from the manner in which one ordinarily sees them—the two left-arms, sprouting from the elbow are usual—, but the artist seems to have devised this method in order to give a more plausible rendering, considering that he was showing one arm loosely resting aginst the thigh, and the other had to be shown holding the lotus. At the same time the influence of the Pahari model upon which the painting is obviously based is seen not only in this detail but also in the manner in which Vishnu's *dhoti* is treated in relaxed scallops, or the skirt of Lakshmi's dress is rendered in painted, overlapping edges. The border of the painting, with its arrangement of four-dotted flowers and transverse strokes in white against a black ground is perhaps also in imitation of the more delicately worked images of late Kangra painting. The red border on the outside, which gives this work the look of a proper miniature—not a folio from an illustrated manuscript—is another link that one can establish.

In iconographical terms the painter asserts his own vision faithfully upon that of the Pahari artist. He renders Brahma, for example, as a youthful figure with four heads while in Pahari paintings as a matter of routine Brahma is shown as a sage-like bearded person, as befits his designation as the *pitamaha*, i.e. a grand-father, in Puranic descriptions. A characteristic Kashmiri touch in the painting is the imaginative manner in which Shiva pays homage to Vishnu on Shesha; the folded hands are as meaningful as the stream of the river Ganga that respectfully falls and merges with the great waters.

At bottom left of the painting, against the silvery water-surface, is a brief Persian inscription in the *shikasta* script. All of it is not legible, but what can be read here is the name 'Gadadhara' and possibly the place where he lived, 'Raina wari', the famous Kashmiri pandits' quarters in Srinagar town. The reading is open to question. But if it is right, the inscription helps to identify a late owner of the painting. It is unlikely that it represents the signatures of the painter.

P. 35. THE GODDESS RADIATING ENERGY
40 cm x 28 cm
Private Collection, Zurich
Published: *Maggs Bulletin*, No. 25

The page, in the dead centre of which this image of the goddess, eighteen-armed, possessed of remarkable energies, is painted has all the appearance of an illuminated page that occurs generally at the beginning of ambitious, royal manuscripts of a great classical Persian text, or an historical narrative. In the centre of the page is a richly illuminated sun-burst like *shamsa*, worked out with all the classical fineness that one associates with Persian work. In gold, lapis-blue, red and jade-green, an extremely intricate pattern is worked out radiating outwards from the centre, diamonds, arches, indents, shooting from the form. Above and below the *shamsa*, and in a lesser degree to the right and the left, are again other highly decorative medallions. The four corners of this large page are filled with spandrels, again in the same fine floral geometric work in blue, gold, red and green. The margins have an intervoven, geometric scroll, and a surround of rules in vermilion red.

When seen from a slight distance, the page would strike one as Persian or as Persian-inspired Indian work of very high order. But then the figure of the Goddess placed in the heart of the central *shamsa*-medallion comes as a surprise. It is unlikely that the figure of the Goddess is an after-thought, or has been painted over something that was originally written inside the central circle. The page seems to have been *conceived* thus: conveying that the Goddess is occupying this place legitimately. Through her presence the page becomes a perfect fusion between the Islamic and the Hindu strains in Kashmiri painting that are seen so often at work. The central circle is all but filled with a large lotus, very

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delicately painted: the points of the petals are pink with the colour becoming less and less marked as one moves towards the centre. At its heart sits the Goddess in her full majesty, remarkably self assured, In her arms she carries a great range of weapons: swords, bow, arrow, dagger, axe, noose, mace, and discus among them. The arms fan out from the elbows on both sides, and the weapons, symbols of the energies that she has drawn from the gods in her battle against the forces of darkness, are elegantly, firmly held. She herself is rendered red of complexion, emphasising the *rajasik* quality of the God-head. Richly bejewelled, crowned, the goddess wears a brief gold-coloured *choli*, with green leaf patterns against gold that look resplendant. A great deal of care and feeling seems to have been lavished by the painter upon the form of the Goddess. The drawing is very firm, the colouring extremely precise.

The treatment of the full blown lotus which is not simply used here as a seat for the Goddess, but is spread all around her, is highly inventive. The long petals as they spread out in all directions appear as if they were points of light behind the Goddess's majestic head, replacing the usual nimbus; but the same petals turn soft and pliable when shown beneath her, as would befit a seat for the gods.

P. 36. A BUDDHIST SHRINE
Detail from a painted scroll
Height: 55 cm
Collection: Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi
Acc. No. 6830-6831

In the uncommon scrolls that serve as a visual record of the intrepid compaign of Vazir Zorawar Singh into the remote area of Ladakh, Zanskar. etc. (see, M. 16 *supra*) there are vignettes of life as lived in those mountain ranges which seem to be wholly unaffected by the armed conflict that goes on in that terrain. In this detail which presents an artificial view of things as they obtain, the painter captures the peaceful life inside a Buddhist monastery that seems to go on virtually unaffected by the encircling turmoil. What we see is a complex of buildings, densely set together, some parts seen only in profile, others only from front, still others like the inner courtyard of the main monastery opened up and revealed in its entirety. Where the monastery stands, one sees a kind of outer wall on which, at regular intervals, banners fluttering in the air are installed.The structure is in several levels, and at the very top there are spires that rise high in the air. At different levels there are gateways that lead into the complex of buildings inside which one sees arched passages, small rooms with doors and windows, that look like underground ducts. Behind the main shrine is a flat, unoccupied area that rises in a sharp curve beyond which craggy mountain tops are densely set against each other. At left there is a whole series of small native shrines or *gumphas* identified by brief Devanagari inscriptions as 'Mani'. Several of these are seen, varying in size, placed at different angles. Towards the left and the right of shrine appear large stacks of wood inside sheds, again identified through inscriptions.

What is of the greatest interest is the inside of the shrine which is dominated by a colossal standing image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, nearly naked, four-armed, wearing a bejewelled crown, and carrying in one of the hands a small *vajra*. Around the image, and dwarfed by it, sit a large number of Lama priests, chanting to the accompaniment of music made on large drums with soft tipped, curved sticks. The priests are all simply dressed in yellow or red clothes. They sit cross legged, some of them with their hands folded. Others use rosary beads. The image is meant to be seen as gilded, even though no real gold has been used in these scrolls. The painter distinguishes the colour of the image from its surroundings, giving it a yellowish appearance; the pedestal on which the image is placed is stepped. On either side of the pedestal are small arched areas in

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which a figure is shown curiously leaning back as if to fit within the arch. The suggestion possibly is of some figures being painted in the recess of the wall.

The treatment of the arms of the Buddha image is very interesting and differs from the usual Kashmiri way of rendering multiple arms. Here the arms do not spring from the elbow. The two front arms hang down, and along the body, one of the hands holding the *vajra;* the two back arms, if they could be so called, come from behind, pass in front of the first two arms and are bent at the elbows so as to rest against the chest. One of the hands is held in the *abhaya mudra*. It is an altogether innovative rendering, possibly based on what the painter saw, or thought he saw, in the image. On either side of the head of the image, behind which a sloped nimbus fitting the conical projection of the back wall is placed, two small figures of priests seem to be painted on the wall.

The connection between these scrolls and the mainstream of Kashmiri painting wears very thin at times. But that is a matter which is discussed elsewhere.

An inscription in Devanagari to the right of the shrine reads something like 'Labiro Thakore Dawara Chala'. The import is not clear, but there is no doubt that the shrine is sought to be identified through this inscription. It is interesting to find a Buddhist shrine described as a *thakur dwara,* a term ordinarily used for a Vaishnava temple.

P. 37. GURU NANAK WITH FOLLOWERS
28.1 cm x 24.6 cm
Collection: Himachal Pradesh State Museum, Shimla
Acc. No. 75.246
Unpublished.

This finely painted leaf belonged possibly to a *Janamsakhi* manuscript at one time. However, no text has survived; and the only indication of the painting being related to a *Janamsakhi* manuscript is the subject, as is analysed below. On the 'back' of the painting there is a *swastika* symbol drawn with a finger dipped in very light *geru* colour: this 'back' may in fact be the obverse of the folio; when turned, the painting would appear at the left of the page facing it, thus becoming something akin to a frontispiece. This may only be a guess; but it helps place the painting as the opening folio of a manuscript.

In the painting, Guru Nanak is shown seated in the centre, rendered large and monumental. A finely painted tree at the back provides shade. A follower stands by his side waving a *chauri* over his head and Bhai Mardana, seated at left, is playing his *rabab* instrument. In addition, however, there are several other figures in the painting, four of them ascetics or *sants*. Towards the top left and slightly below it there are two figures, the one at top, old and bearded, the other young and clean shaven, close to Guru Nanak himself. Next to the standing follower waving the *chauri* is another young looking ascetic, seated cross-legged. At bottom right again are two more ascetics, one old and bearded and the other much younger. All these figures are seen seated on tiger or leopard skins to emphasise their meditative, ascetic nature. Only the young ascetic behind the *chauri*-bearing follower is seated on a narrow strip made up entirely of a lotus-petal frieze that stretches from end to end in the middle of the painting behind Guru Nanak. There are two more figures in the painting: a dark-skinned, brown-haired young acolyte stands reverently at some distance, wearing many necklaces and dressed only in a brief loin cloth. His dark body glistens. At bottom right, in the outermost corner is a young figure, fully dressed, wearing a brief cap, possibly one of the sons of Guru Nanak who is inducted into the picture.

The presence of these ascetic figures raises the suggestion in one's mind that the scene painted is one of those '*goshthis*', or close gatherings, in which Guru Nanak was involved in his career. The *Janamsakhis* speak of several *goshthis,* and this may be the painter's way of introducing the theme by bringing into the

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painting ascetics of different orders, beliefs, and persuasions. No one is clearly identified, and there are no clues available about the intention of the painter. But these figures are not seen in immediate proximity to Guru Nanak, and cannot by themselves be taken to be followers, like Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala. They are possibly personages with whom Guru Nanak had meaningful encounters at one time or the other.

Guru Nanak's figure, large and perfectly centred in the painting, draws great attention to itself. It is impressively rendered, much feeling being visible in his stance, the slightly inclined head, the grave and thoughtful view, and the expression of peace on the face. The body is draped in a loose, gold-coloured cloth which sets off the number of garlands and *malas* that adorn his figure. But as if forcefully to bring attention to his saintly, other-worldly inclinations, to the shoulder cloth also clings a patch-work shawl, the traditional *gudri* of one who has renounced the world. The juxtaposition of golden garments on the one hand and the recluse's *gudri* is fascinating in itself. On his head Guru Nanak wears a close fitting cap with a projection. The cap is patterned in red stripes with brief floral designs on it in white. Behind the head spreads out, expansively, a gold nimbus, not of a regular circular, oval or conical shape. The size and the shape of the nimbus lead the painter to considerably broaden the trunk of the tree against which it is set behind Guru Nanak. The crown of the tree is very precisely rendered: dense, concentrated foliage within concentric circles in different shades of green spread extensively to afford shade.

The painting is richly coloured, the ground itself split up into areas of different colours that glisten on the page. The lower part is painted a rich carmine red. Towards the middle of the page a narrow band spreads from end to end, as noticed earlier, consisting entirely of overlapping, neatly arranged lotus petals. Against this orderly spread, clouds in white are painted. To the richness of these colours in the background and the design of the carpet on which Guru Nanak is seated, the floral margins enclosing a lattice work pattern of white against blue, the white balustrade and the elaborately painted bolster placed behind Guru Nanak, add a great deal.

The margin around the painting, again, is sumptuous and delicate. Small cartouches with gold ground painted on a rich red surface run all around the painting. Within the cartouches are small open-petalled flowers in a variety of colours, the effect being close to the work seen on painted woodwork rather than on the usual papier-mache objects decorated in Kashmir. On the border, all around the margins are narrow arched patterns in gold with projecting bosses of flowers in red and green, topped in some cases by thin straight rules.

P. 38. A RAGAMALA LEAF
Folio from an unidentified manuscript
49 cm x 44.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 59.155/4

As noticed before (see, M. 21, *supra*) this folio must have been one of the two devoted to the same theme; and must have formed a part of the manuscript from which they have now been detached. Clearly, the eighteen *ragas* and *raginis* that are depicted here in four vertical columns must have had an accompanying, complementary leaf, with the other eighteen *ragas* and *raginis*, to make up the list of thirty-six that is usually associated with a full *ragamala* series. This would correspond to the *ragas* and *raginis* that occur in the Guru Granth Sahib.

The iconographies of the various musical modes depicted here are all, in a general sense, familiar from other *ragamalas* painted in the Panjab, Pahari, Rajasthani and the Deccani traditions. However, as elsewhere, there are no exact correspondences available and the same *raga* or *ragini*, barring a very few, tends to be differently represented in different styles, or in the hands of different family

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workshops.

In general the broad repertoire of 'themes', or visualisations, as also of painting, remains very similar in *ragamalas*. men seated in meditation; lover and beloved embracing; a lady in the forest with deer or peacocks; a lady playing alone on a musical instrument; a prince listening to music; a lady attended upon by maids and absorbed in adorning herself; a prince approached by courtiers and attendants; a lover in the company of several women, and so on. Reflections of the *baramasa* themes, of *nayaka-nayika* classifications, also appear in *Ragamala* leaves. This exactly is what can be seen in the schematic representations on this finely painted folio. At the top left, the image is that of a devotee seated in meditation on a low *chauki,* the object of his adoration on a pedestal in front of him, and a tiger seen at the back against a pavilion at the other end of the terrace. The Gurmukhi inscription on this small panel reads 'Gauda': Bengali is the usual name by which a *ragini* with this iconography is described. In another panel in the top/horizontal register, a lady is seated under a canopy, attended upon by a maid, while another maid brings to her offerings on a platter. The caption reads: 'Maru'; however, *Maru* is treated in some other *Ragamalas* as a martial theme with warriors clashing, and so on. One keeps on noticing this kind of iconographic confusion. A maiden with a *vina* on her shoulders and wandering about in a forested countryside, attracting deer, is easily understood in other *ragamala* sets as 'Todi'; with the same iconography, the *ragini* here is identified as 'Prabhati'.

This apart, however, the richness of the leaf, and its colourful aspect quickly impress themselves upon the mind. The architectural settings, the costumes, the furnishings, the small objects scattered around, the thrones, chairs and *chaukis,* the trees, all have an air of sumptuousness about them. A great deal of gold has been used in the patterns on dresses, and on objects etc. The attempt clearly is to impart preciousness to the images.

The figural types, both of men and women, stay essentially close to those seen in the mainstream of Kashmiri painting, even though some influence of Pahari work is discernible. The women, one notices, consistently wear short *cholis* and skirts with their bodies draped in veils. The Kashmiri dress, the *pairahan* and tight pyjamas, is nowhere in sight. Likewise, men sport the kinds of *jamas* that are routinely worn in Pahari painting. On the women one notices the typical 'Kashmiri lock of hair' ending in a thick curl along the temple. It would appear as if the painter were adapting himself here constantly, using personifications and compositions taken from elsewhere, and then fitting them into his own ideas of what persons and things should essentially look like.

In the colouring of the folio, however, he takes little or no cognisance of other styles. A typical Kashmiri palette dominates: orange, scarlet, yellow, purple, pink and blue used much in the same fashion as they are used in countless other Kashmir works. The skies here are the same uniform blue with minor streaks of clouds in them; the hills that rise in the background, and the floors of some terraces, are painted in purple and pink; the most favourite colour in skirts and *cholis* and *jamas* is orange, spotted with gold patterns; large areas are coloured a uniformly flat monochrome.

P. 39. LEAF FROM AN ARTIST'S SKETCH-BOOK
10.5 cm x 15 cm
Collection: Museum Rietberg, Zurich
Acc. No: RVI 1451
Unpublished.

Drawings from Kashmir are rather rare; rarer still are the survivals of artist's sketch books. This leaf is therefore of special interest, even though the quality of drawing that one sees on it is not of the highest. Featured here are several heads,

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and two women's figures upto the bust. On the top-left is the elephant head of Ganesha topped by a crown, trunk curling, an ear flapping: in the same row, horizontally, are seen crowned heads, apparently of Krishna, and one turbaned head of a man. In the second register at the extreme left is the full-faced head of the goddess, the third-eye opening on the forehead, earrings dangling from stylised ears, crown on the head, a circular line marking the chin; two women's heads in profile flank a woman's bust, chest clad in a *choli*, a veil draped over the head and drawn across the upper part of the body. Alone in the bottom register is a very Kashmiri looking woman, with a flat skull-cap, long curls along the ears; a *kurti* covering the upper part of the body, with a long slit at the side; one hand extends holding up a cup and the other holding a vaguely shaped flask.

The drawings are all done with brush and are in black or sepia. The frontally seen head of the Goddess and the figure of the woman holding the flask and the cup of wine are instantly recognisable as Kashmiri. The three crowned male heads suggest a Pahari affiliation as does the woman's bust in the middle register, the area of the breasts, the design of the *choli* with an opening at the neck especially strengthening that impression. But on closer examination it would seem as if it is a Kashmiri artist who is trying to pick up from Pahari models. There are several interesting, if initially rather minor looking, variations, that one notices: in the treatment of the hair, of the crowns, especially of the eyes which are very Pahari looking in the case of men. The prominent strands of hair drawn over the ears of the three women in the middle register are best associated with a Kashmiri hand even if there are 'Pahari' looks that one discerns.

If one is reading the drawing correctly—seeing it as being in a Kashmiri hand that is familiarizing itself with work from a different tradition—the Pahari—the drawing certainly assumes importance, for it helps to explain much that one sees in some Kashmiri works with a Pahari input in them. The opposite way of reading this drawing, that it is the work of a Pahari, or a late Kangra or Jammu, artist, familiarizing himself with the Kashmiri idiom of doing things is far less convincing as a proposition. The elephant headed god, the heads of the women and a lone man, and the wine-serving Kashmiri woman who could belong to the pages of an illustrated Hafiz manuscript make for a study fascinating in itself.

P. 40. STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN A WALLED CITY
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Qissa-i-Chahar Dervish*
17.5 cm x 12.5 cm
Collection: Panjab University Library, Chandigarh
Acc. No. 564
Unpublished.

The fascinating mix of styles that mark the illustrations in this important, dated manuscript scripted in Lahore (See, M. 25 *supra*) is reflected very well in this uncommon page. What the painter renders here is strange happenings in the night that a visitor to the walled city chances upon. As he stands under a tree, wondering finger raised to the lips, he sees a wooden box being lowered from the rampart of the city into the moat, now dry of water, that surrounds the city. There is no life in the city at this time except for a lone man seen on the rampart, holding the top end of the rope in his hands while lowering the box. A stillness prevails, enhancing the mysterious effect.

Views of walled cities like this are generally rare, and almost non-existent in the work from Kashmir. What the painter seems to do, and to delight in, is to employ his whole range of pigments in describing the city: the light-green ground, and the dark green foliage in the fore-ground apart, he builds the picture up from below with the help of violet, green, brown, light brown, yellow, jade-green, gold and a great deal of white, among others. Then he embarks upon showing a series of roofs of different kinds densely huddled together inside the

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city walls. Almost certainly he decides to draw upon the types of roofs that formed part of his memory: domed, flat, conical, gabled, *chhatri*-topped, and the like. The colours of these roofs are subtly varied. Among the shapes that startle one, however, is that of a sharp pyramidal roof supported by an open lotus petal which in turn rests upon a series of levels that become bigger as they move down, till they rest upon a squarish structure. Almost certainly, there is a reference here to the wooden architecture of Kashmir: a structure like the Shah Hamadan mosque comes to the mind. There are no exact correspondences to be seen perhaps, but a generalised bringing in of the repertoire of architectural members on the part of the painter can be guessed at.

The two figures, especially the person standing and watching the goings on at bottom right, seem to be taken from works that are generally described as 'Afghan-Kashmiri' in style. The man is dressed in a *qaba* topped by a short sleeved gown, long leather boots, a loose, heavy turban with a projecting *kulah*. The man on the rampart also sports a loose, heavy turban. Also discernible, on the face of the man outside, is a slight shading in red on the face, a detail easy to associate with the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' set of conventions.

There are folios in this manuscript that seem to draw heavily on Pahari models; others that appear to have some Panjab painting in the background; still others that show something of the Afghan-Kashmiri style in operation. This folio clearly possesses, at least in the type of figures seen here, an 'Afghan-Kashmiri' air; at the same time, there is a memory of Kashmir somewhere in the architecture. This manuscript may not be the only one of its kind in which these diverse streams tend to get merged but, in the context of an attempt at understanding different strands in Kashmiri painting, this manuscript and this folio assume an importance.

P. 41. THE TRAINING OF A FALCON
Folio from an illustrated manuscript on Falconry
35 cm x 27.5 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh
Acc. No. D-144
Published: Goswamy and Jhamb, "An Illustrated manuscript on falconry", *Oriental Art*, vol. XIX, NO. I, Spring 1973.

Very few folios of this extremely interesting manuscript on falconry, with Persian text beautifully calligraphed in *nastaliq* script, and with each folio containing a delicate, illuminated border, have survived. The title of the text is not available, but there is no doubt about the contents, for all the folios that have survived and all the miniatures, deal exclusively with the training of falcons The opening lines of the third chapter which occur on one of the folios record that those are the views of "this humble servant, and according to the experience of the Mir- i-shikars of this age".

The text goes into details of this kind: "it is necessary that the young *bahri* (kind of falcon) is hooded for one whole night and day and made to perch on the hand while the hood or rufter has been put in proper place. This is to be done so that the hawk becomes used to the hood. On the second night the string of the hood having been slightly loosened, half the eyes of the hawk should be uncovered and then the hood immediately replaced and pulled down. This is to be done till the hawk gets used to this . . . after three nights and days the eyes should be completely uncovered and the bird should be fed. If the hawk is plump and healthy, then the most important thing to do is to eliminate fat from the mixed feed . . . it should, as recommended by Haji Ilyas, be then given a feed, the main ingredient of which is the extract of the aconite plant, or the *koli* green or the granular aloes,...."

In this strain does the text proceed. Quite possibly, the text is based on the celebrated work, the *Baznama-i-Nasiri*. Some of the words in the text have been

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explained thus: "*Sad* in Persian", the text says, "should be understood as 'meaning *Ghari* in Hindi'—suggesting that the text had at least been adapted for use in India.

The illumination, with its fine figural work in gold along the margins, and the repeats of the *kalgha* or curving cypress motif, quite clearly links the work with Kashmir; the very neat *nastaliq* calligraphy may also owe itself to a Kashmiri hand. The paintings, at least initially, present a problem for they do not immediately fit into the usual Kashmiri range of idioms. The dresses worn by many figures are indicative on the other hand of a Panjab plains connection; a broad 'cummerband' is tied to the waist so as to cover the buttocks completely at the back; turbans are tied so that their back ends are allowed to hang, shielding the back of the neck. These sartorial features are all suggestive of the kind of dress that had become popular at the Lahore Court under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But there are other figures, as in this folio, which are dressed in the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' manner, a long *qaba,* secured at the waist with a waist band, a full, slightly fluffy turban, long leather boots. In this folio, the two men who are traders also wear beards that are reminiscent of Muslim looking characters from poetic texts illustrated in Kashmir. On one folio, the manner in which the wooden architecture is treated, with carved wooden pillars and fine lattice work, also suggest a Kashmir connection.

The colouring is of a mixed kind with purples and pinks and orange and gold floral work on dresss mingling with more subdued colours. The landscape shows no connection with the manner in which landscape is usually rendered in Kashmiri works. It would seem as if the work was done in awareness of the work done in the Panjab plains, and contains some admixture of it. Some of it belongs evidently to a Kashmiri hand skillfully adjusting itself to local needs or models. The manuscript may well have been commissioned in the Panjab plains, from a Kashmiri group by a noble at the Sikh court. That would explain the presence of very Sikh-looking characters—chiefs and attendants featured in these leaves.

The present page is imaginatively composed. The format of the manuscript is vertical but most of the illustrations take the horizontal form. Here the text and the pictures are mixed, so that for looking at the painting one has to turn the page to its side. Obviously more space than was afforded by the relatively small width of the vertical format, was needed to lay the action out. Here, the bad habit of a falcon is being illustrated, the falcon having flown off and perched itself on a tree. The trainers are tempting it to come down. One of them is probably pointing to a ball of meat kept on the gloved right hand while the other holds a captive bird as bait for the falcon. The background is left bare; the tree is stylised, although a lot of attention has gone into depicting its roots. The gold work on the entire folio has a fine, delicate character.

P. 42. ILLUMINATED FOLIO
From a manuscript of *Guru Granth Sahib*
29.5 cm x 30 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

Some of the most refined and sumptuous work in the area of illumination was done by Kashmiri artists when calligraphing the sacred book of the Sikhs, *Guru Granth Sahib.* Numerous copies of the book were written and decorated, not all of them equally rich. But the best among these were certainly exceedingly sumptuous and full of feeling.

This folio—there is only one companion folio from this manuscript that seems to have survived—bears testimony to the kind of care lavished upon the writing and the illumination of the holy book. Since no painting, or figurative work of any kind, was used to illustrate the holy book, all the attention seems to have gone into embellishment in the form of illumination and calligraphy of a very

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neat, precise kind. If these two folios are any indication, the entire voluminous text of the book was written in this fashion, each folio illuminated, each with a central text panel of an octagonal shape into which 14 lines of text in *Gurmukhi* characters were fitted. Both sides of each folio bore illumination of the kind that was related to each other, only minor variations being introduced. From one folio to the other, however, while the general scheme of illumination in terms of organising the scale, was kept, the colour schemes and the patterns changed. One can imagine therefore, an almost unending series of variations upon illumination within the manuscript. The present folio is clearly inscribed, where the sacred texts begins, with the familiar opening words: '*Ek Onkar Satnam Karta Purukh Nirbhau Nirvair Akal Murat Ajuni Sehbhang Gurprasad*'. The entire space with the octagonal panel is, as a matter of exception, not used up by the text on this opening page. The upper part within the panel is also given to embellishment, intricate floral work in purple upon pink ground, a dense pattern relieved by the superb flourish of the ligature arc of the word 'Omkar' set against it on plain ground. On the reverse of this folio, the calligrapher and illuminator go back to the pattern followed, presumably, in the rest of the manuscript with each text panel being filled with fourteen lines. Around the text panel there is a margin surrounded by heavy gold rules, within which a flower and stem meander is painted against a golden brown ground. This octagonal panel is set in the heart of a large square, which in turn has a broad margin, filled, again with small flowers and creepers, of red, green, violet against a yellow ground. In the spandrel like spaces left between the outer square and the inset octagonal panel, the entire space is filled with delicately rendered floral work against a rich blue ground. At the four corners are painted, in broad sweeps, large 'kalgha' motifs, their inner edges adorned with fern-like spots. The whole effect is akin to a carpet being unrolled, the design intricate, the colouring rich, the overall pattern one of great complexity but also of great beauty. On the outer uncoloured borders, little floral finials project at regular intervals from the decorated outer margin.

One notices that this is not standard arabesque or fillet patterning of the kind that one sees in Kashmiri *sarlauhs* or in Persian manuscripts with illuminations. There may not be in this work the same intricacy of patterning, or the same excess of refinement. But there is here a distinct sense of warmth, and of freedom from rigidity in the choice of colours and in the working out of patterns.

P. 43. THE SACRED SYLLABLE OM:
Panel from a long illustrated and illuminated scroll of the *Bhagavata Purana*
Size of scroll: 2080 cm x 11 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 60.1628
Unpublished.

At the opening of this enormously long, remarkably painstakingly written text of the tenth and the eleventh skanda of the *Bhagavata Purana*, especially sacred to Vaishnavas, are featured several invocatory and sacred images: Ganesha seated with Saraswati standing next to him with an attendant; the ten avataras of Vishnu; and, of course, this small, compact, meaningful group of deities, all fitted into the body of the sacred syllable, 'Om'.

This syllable is packed with meanings of the kind that the *Mandukya Upanishad* attaches to it in a celebrated passage: "This is the self with regard to the word Om, with regard to its elements. The elements are the fourth, the fourth the elements, the letter 'A', the letter 'U', and letter 'M'.

"In the waking state, common to all men, is the letter 'A;, the first element, from Apti (obtaining) or from Adi-mantiva (being first), he obtains verily, indeed, all desires, he becomes first—he who knows this.

"In the sleeping state, brilliant is the letter 'U', the second element, from Utkarsha, (exaltation) of from Ubhayatva (intermediateness)

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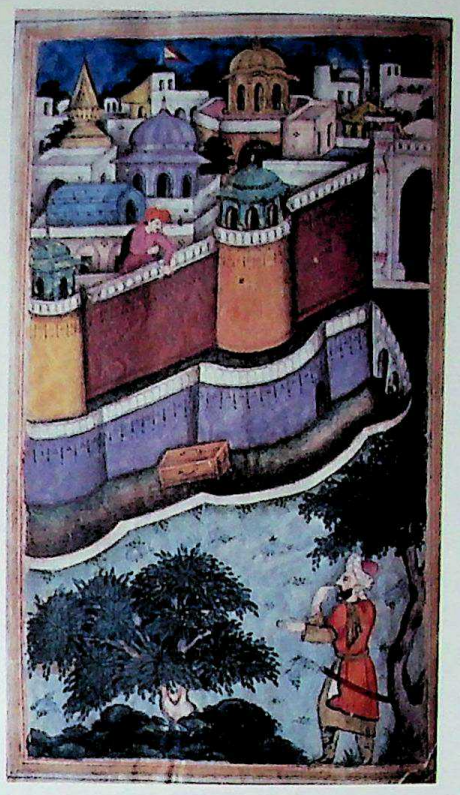

P40. Strange happenings in a Walled City: folio from a ms. of the *Qissa-i-Chahar Dervish*.

P41. The training of a falcon: Folio from a ms. on falconry.

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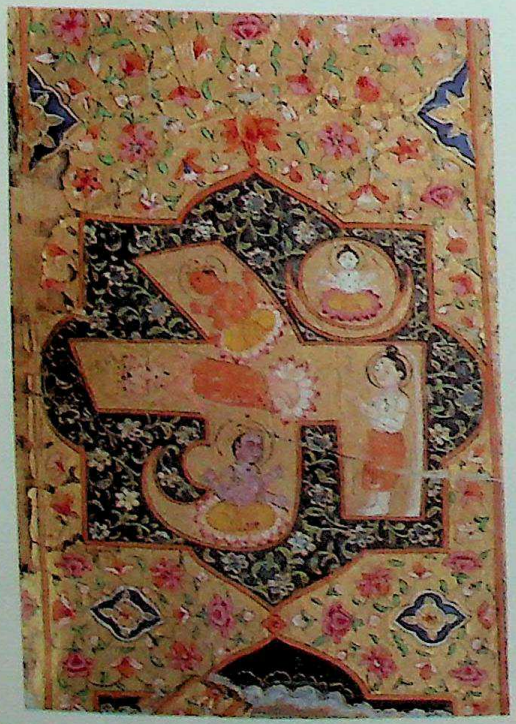
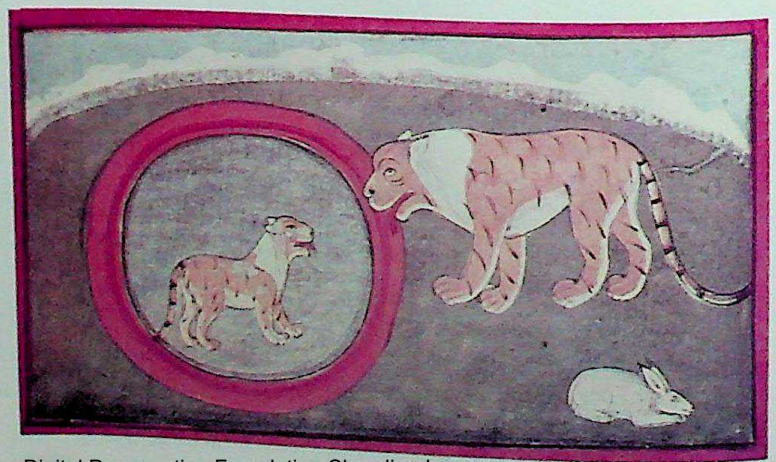
P42. Illuminated folio from a ms. of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.



P43. The Sacred Syllable Om: detail from an illustrated scroll.



P44. The Tale of a Tiger: folio from a ms. of the *Panchatantra*.

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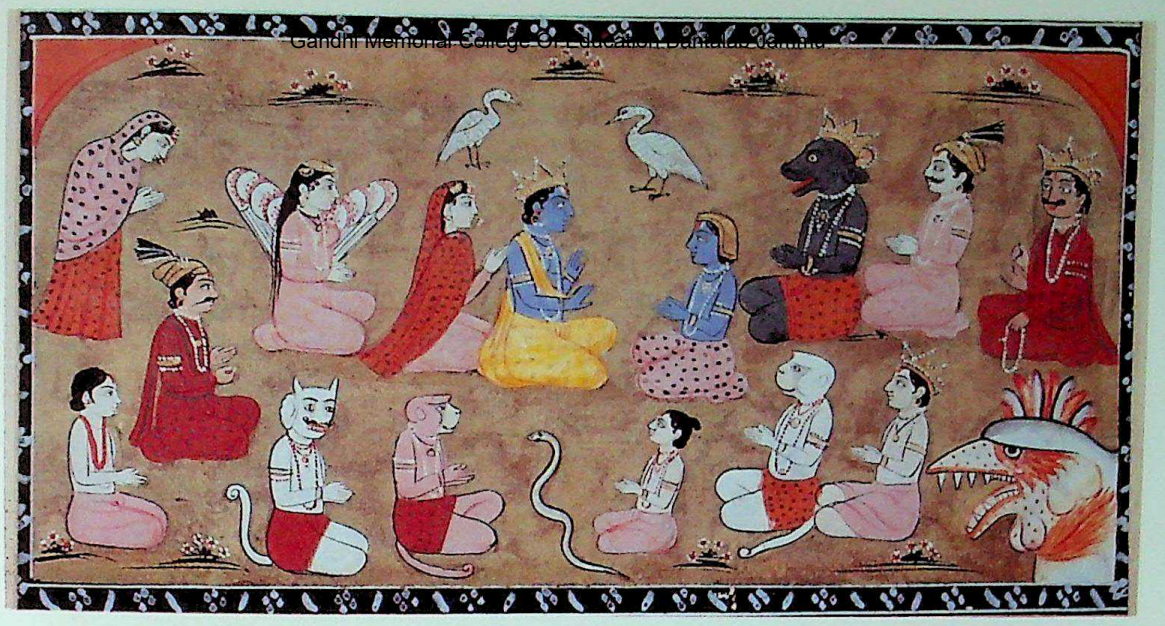
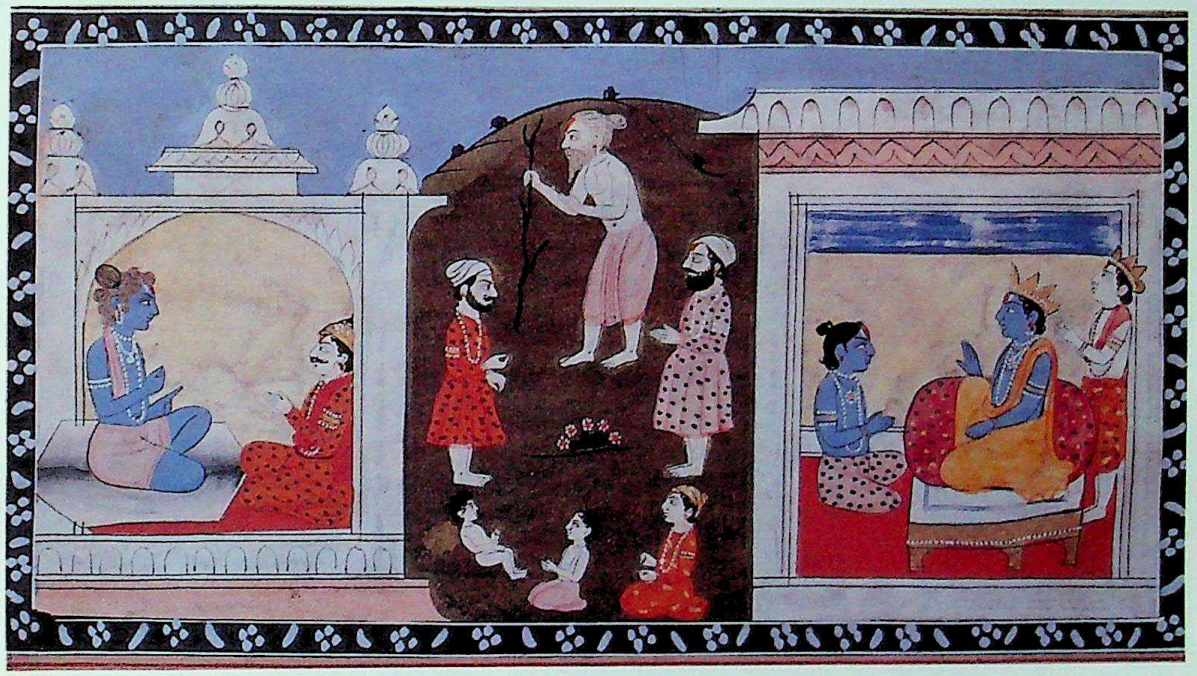


P45. Rama and Sita with devotees.



P46. The Cycle of Life: folio from an unidentified series.

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P47. Calligraphy in *nastaliq*: folio from a ms. of the *Ragamala*

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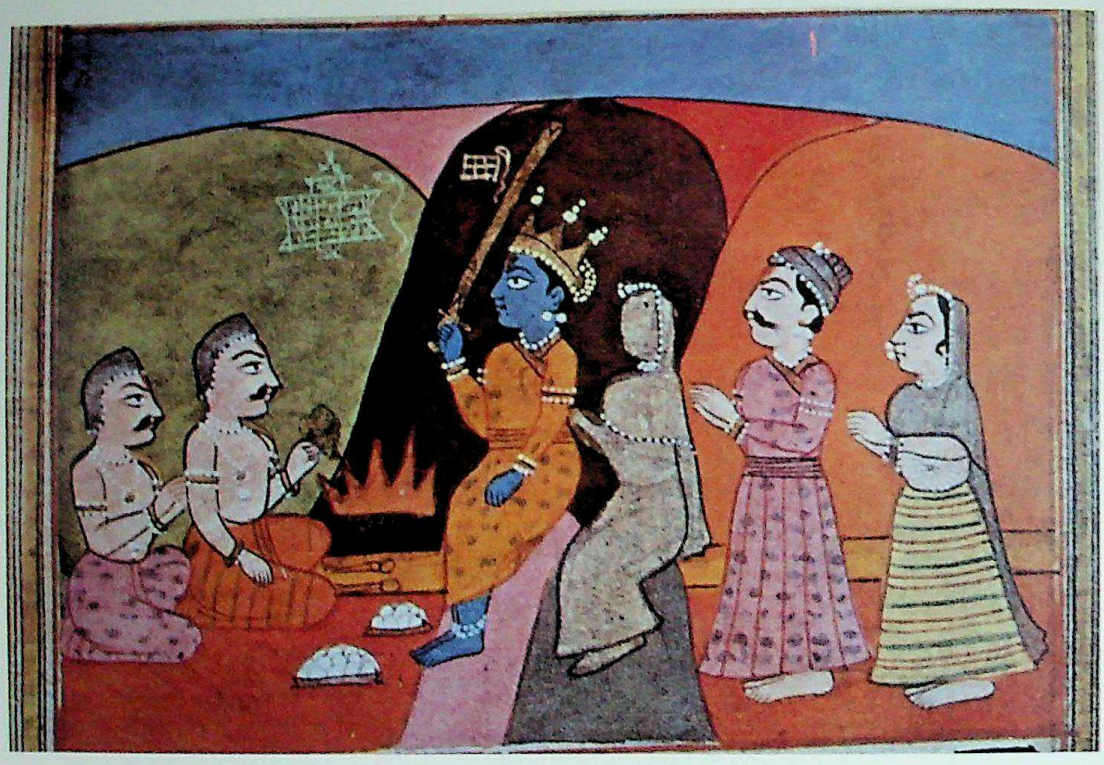
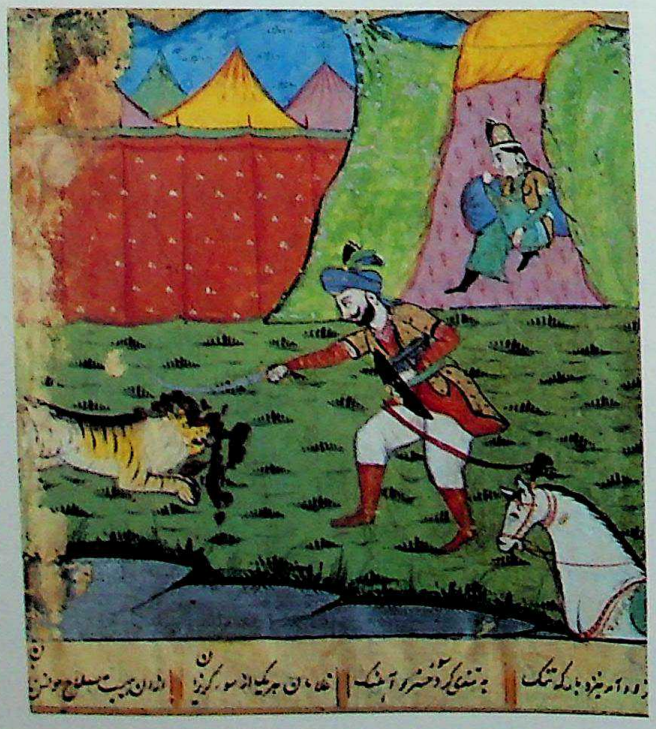
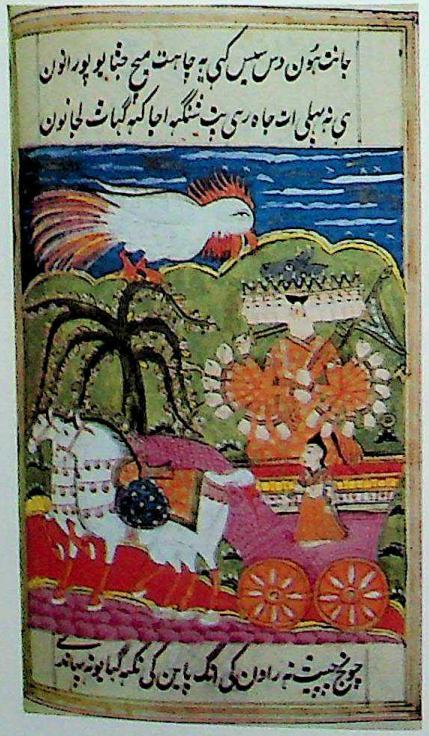


P48. The Marriage of Krishna and Rukmini: folio from a ms. of the *Bhagavata Purana*.



P49. A warrior slays a tiger: folio from an unidentified ms. in Persian.



P50. The Angel Gabriel rescues Yusuf: folio from a ms. of the *Yusuf-Zuleikha* of Jami.

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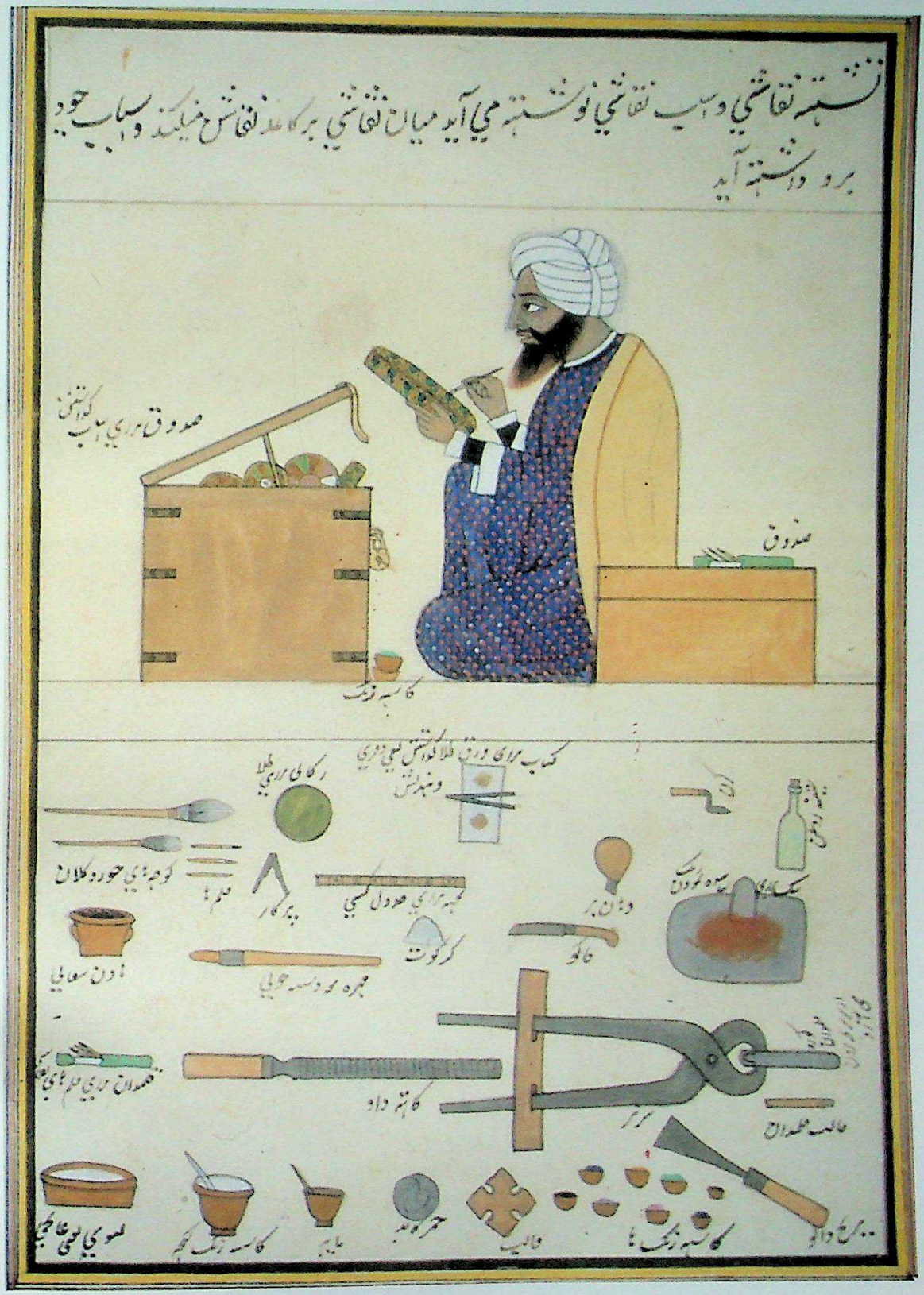

P51. A papier-mache painter at work: folio from an album of drawings of professions.

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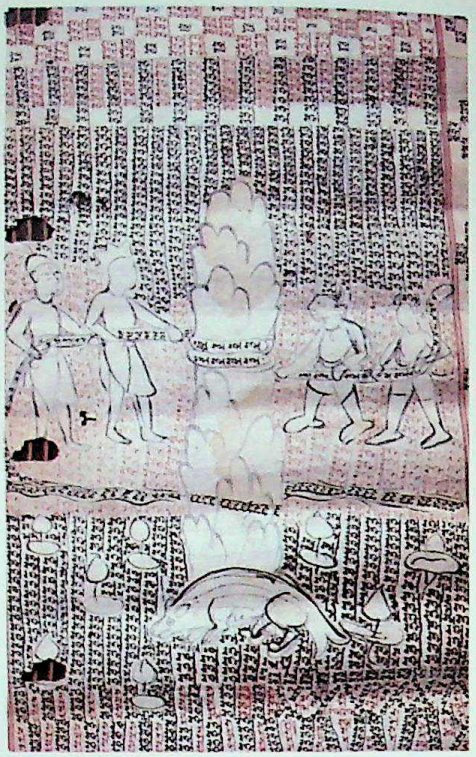
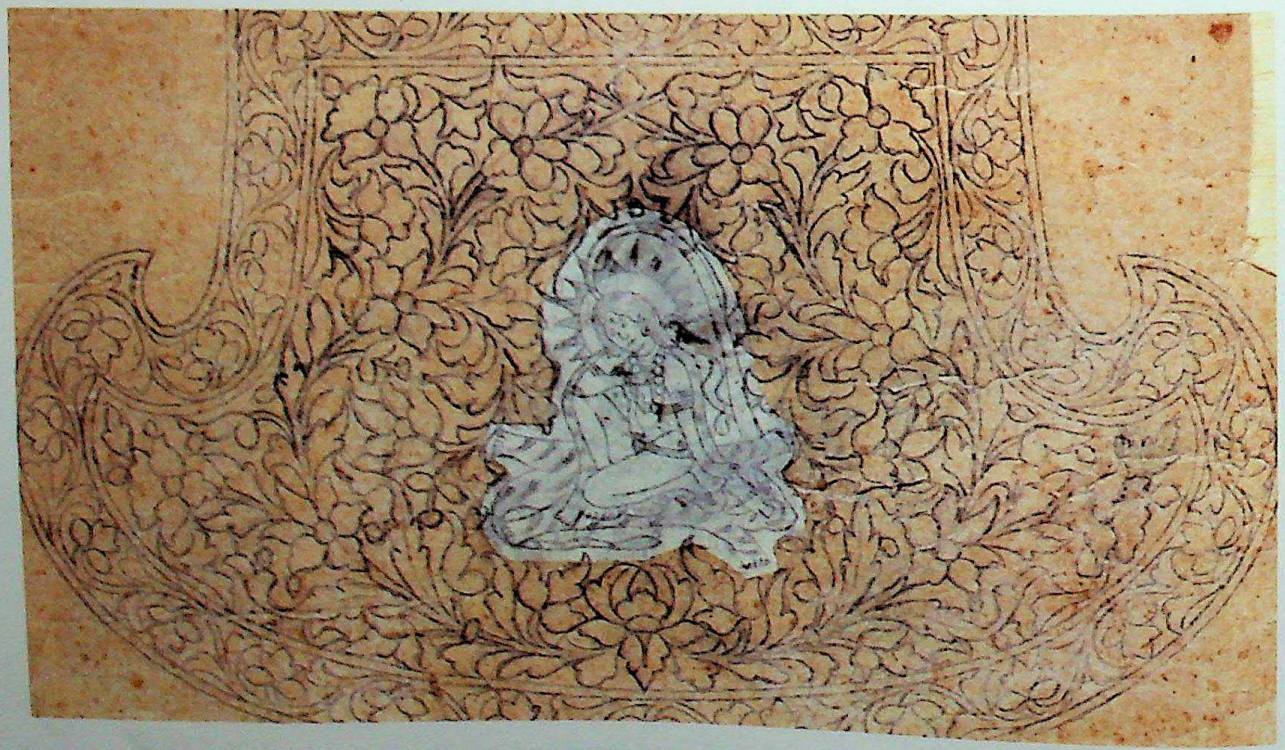
P52. Vishwarupa: the Cosmic Form of Vishnu; folio from an unidentified ms.



P54. A Sacred Design: from an unidentified series.



P53. A pattern for a hand-fan.

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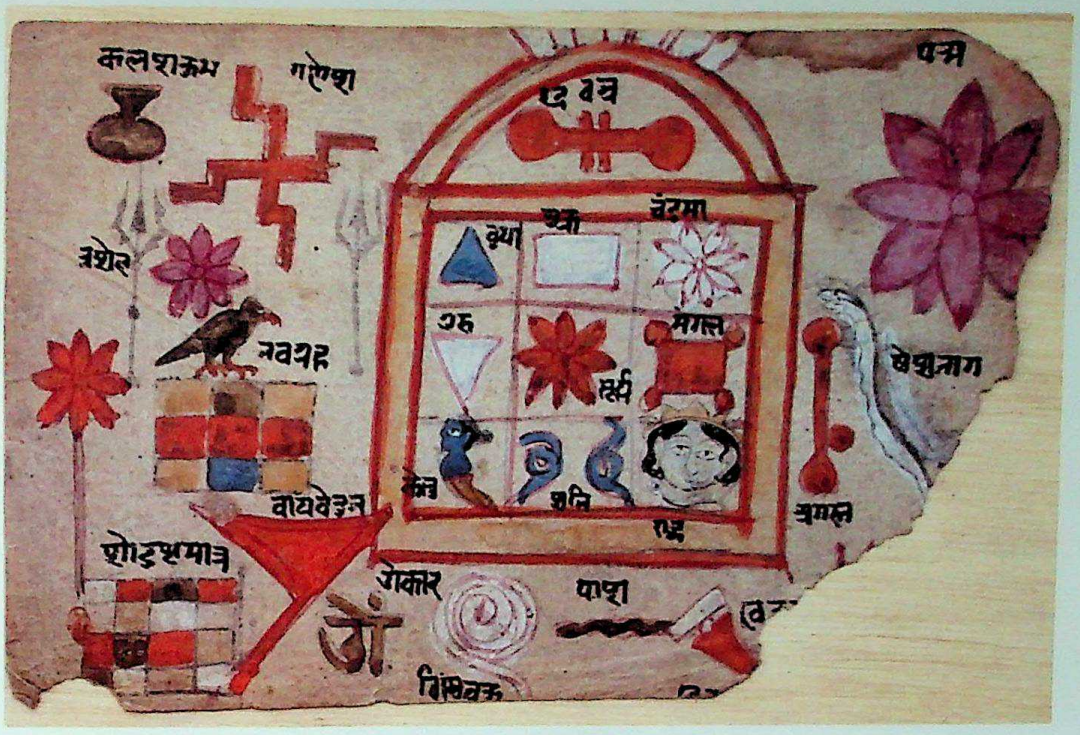

P55. Sacred Signs: from an unidentified series.

P56. Shiva and Parvati in the World Lotus: from an unidentified series.

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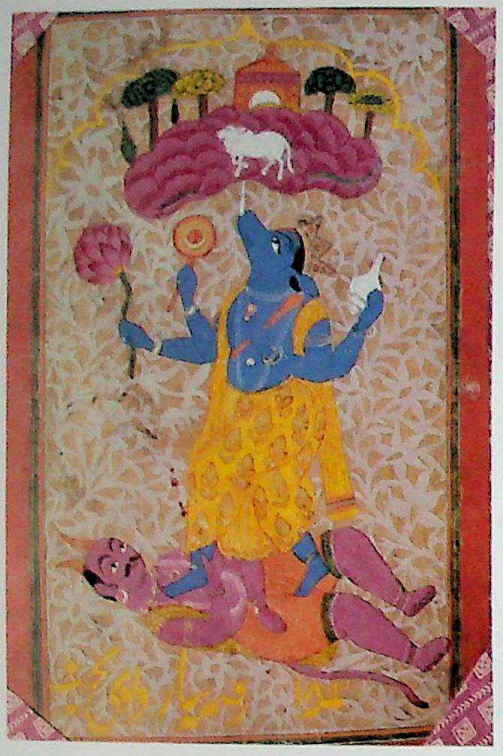
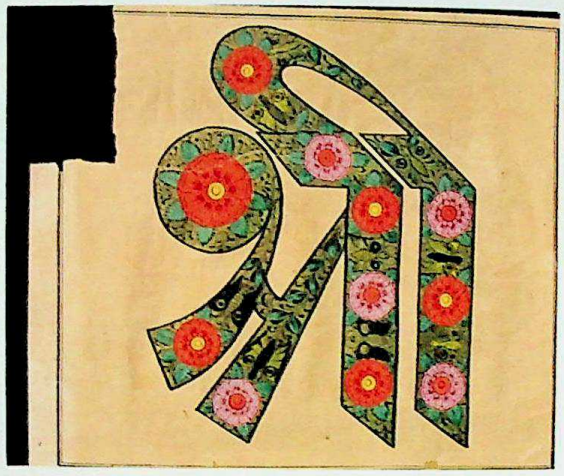
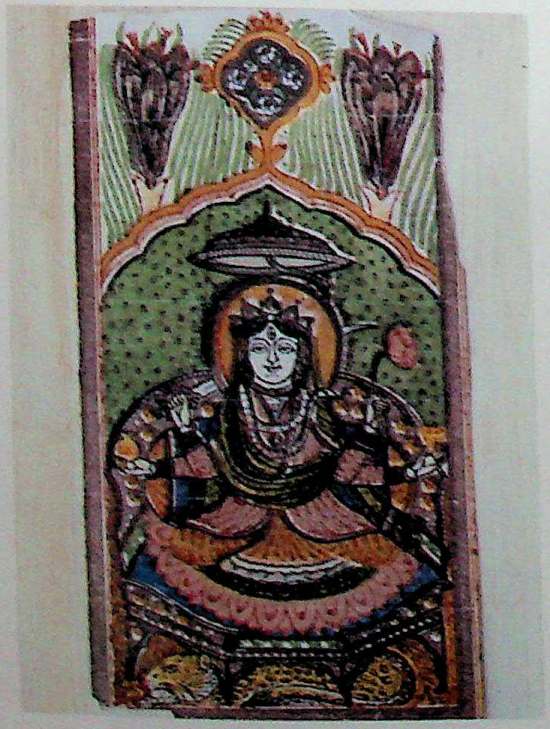


P57. Varaha, the Third Incarnation: from an *Avatara Charitavali* series.



P58. Shri: A Sacred Motif; hand-painted, hand-printed block.



P59. The Goddess enthroned: coloured lithograph.

P60. A Ritual Block-print.

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"He exalts, verily, indeed, the continuity of knowledge, and he becomes equal; one ignorant of Brahman is born in the family of him who knows this.

"The deep-sleep state, the cognitional is the letter 'Ma', the third element from Miti ("creating"). He, verily, indeed, erects this whole world, and he becomes its emerging,—he who knows this.

"The fourth is without an element, with which there can be no delaying, the cessation of development, but, without a second.

"Thus Om is the self indeed,

"He who knows this with his self enters the self—yea, He who knows this!"

In all styles of painting, but possibly more in Kashmiri than elsewhere, one finds panels within illustrated manuscripts painted, with the letter 'Om' written in Devanagari—in Kashmiri painted frequently in the Sharada characters—with the images of the most important of deities fitted into it. Thus, Brahma,Vishnu, Shiva, the great triad, find place within the letter. In the remaining spaces, various deities are brought in, often *Ardhanarishvara* and the figure of the red complexioned Virabhadra. Here, within the word 'Om', one sees in the lower bottom hook, the image of Vishnu, four-armed, seated on a lotus; in the horizontal bar above the figure of Brahma, standing, on a lotus; in the vertical stroke at right stands Shiva, holding a trident and the great river Ganga emerging from his coiled locks; in the diagonal stroke area at top is a seated figure, red-complexioned, four-armed, legs-crossed, possibly Agni. In the circular dot, the *Anusvara,* duly ringed in the lower half by a crescent-moon-like shape, is another deity, not easy to make out but possibly *Ardhanarisvara,* four-armed, seated again on a lotus.

The style of painting throughout this manuscript in these tiny panels is essentially Rajasthani: one sees this clearly as one examines the various conventions, the figuration, the types, the colours chosen etc. But there is little doubt that the profuse and delicate illumination throughout this scroll is distinctly Kashmiri. The surface available to the illuminator was very small; the total width of the scroll is only 11 cm but within this the small squarish panels with arch-like shapes opening out on all four sides so that the impression is of an octagon, are brought in. The borders of the scroll, in its entire length, are filled with a gold ground upon which pink, delicately painted flowers with green bases and a thin, wire-like creeper connecting them, appears. On the main body, in the earlier segment where the paintings appear, the ground is again all gold, with elaborate floral work in pink, green and white with an occasional arabesque like small panel introduced in it, giving the whole surface the aspect of a great carpet that is being spread out, or an enormously expanded *sarlauh* put to a different use. Clearly what is seen here is the result of collaboration between local artists, in Rajasthan, who were responsible for the painting in a style that was obviously preferred by the patron for whom this extraordinarily long, elaborate scroll was prepared, and illuminators who were drawn almost certainly from Kashmir. The whole conception is so native to the work that we are familiar with from Kashmir that there could be very little doubt in this matter.

One notices that in the background of the word '*Om*', the entire panel, dark in colour, is filled with flowers and stems. This is certainly different from the other panels in which the painter brings in a terrace, a background with an inky blue sky with billowing clouds and flying birds. Appropriately, an abstract background is chosen for the word '*Om*', for the painter and the illuminator decide to set this cartouche apart, and take away all suggestion of space.

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P. 44. THE TALE OF A TIGER
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Panchatantra*
11 cm x 8.5 cm
von Portheim Stiftung, Heidelberg
Unpublished.

In the simplest of terms, with almost child-like naivete, the painter renders one of the most often told tales from that early classic, the *Panchatantra*. The tiger who is tricked into jumping into the well by a rabbit, ostensibly to fight 'the other tiger' who lives in the well—his own reflection in fact—is here shown standing at the edge of the well with the clever rabbit shown skulking at the bottom right. The king of the forest whose domain is contested by 'the other king of the forest', is seen looking down; in the well is shown on a much smaller scale, although very close in appearance to the tiger's, reflection. The well, like the commonly seen cistern of water, is seen directly from above, its parapet- ledge reduced to a large orange-red ring, the water at the bottom of the well painted as a circular silver-grey patch. No other detail appears on the page, save the moss-green ground which covers nearly the whole background ending in a high curve at the top. An azure blue sky with clouds on the horizon fills the rest of the space. There is no suggestion of the forest, none of any other animals involved in the episode. The painter picks the most essential part of the fable, and then renders it with all the clarity that he can command.

Paintings treating only of animals not being common in Kashmiri painting, it is difficult to compare the work with other known works. But what one sees in the other folios is enough to convince one that the hand responsible for this copiously illustrated manuscript is Kashmiri. The same figuration, roughly the same range of colours, the same conventions adopted for rocks or trees or architecture, etc. appear here as in more obvious-looking Kashmiri works. The work seems to have been carried out in the plains of the Panjab; the text is all in Gurmukhi characters, written in a neat hand, eight lines to a page; more than five hundred folios make up the manuscript. Some connections with painting as practised in the Panjab—influenced in its turn by Pahari painting—is seen in the dresses, in the rendering of the architectural chambers, etc. The illustrations are thus, a mix of different sources but the dominant hand is Kashmiri.

It would seem as if the group of scribes and artist/artists who were asked to prepare this manuscript were working from a model that might have been handed to them for copying by the patron. In the process, while the text was copied exactly as it was, the paintings which might have been in a different style were adapted to an extent by the Kashmiri painter and made to fit into his vision of things. Some charming effects result from this. While the coarseness of execution in some of the leaves is marked, the folkish inventiveness that we see at work, and a resolute attempt at attaining clarity, remain impressive.

The painting, like other painted leaves in this manuscript, has a bright red border, with a thin rule around the margin, in clear imitation of miniatures taken from the Pahari tradition.

P. 45. RAMA AND SITA WITH DEVOTEES
18 cm x 30 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

The scene is difficult to identify. The central figures—the blue-bodied one dressed in yellow garments and a crown, and his consort seated close behind him—can be seen as Rama and Sita, but only with the help of the figures surrounding the pair, the figures of Hanuman, and the bear king, Jamavant, helping especially in this. With this, other figures begin to fit in; the blue bodied, ascetic-looking figure facing Rama would, perhaps, be that of Bharata, of the

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same complexion as the brother to whom he was deeply devoted, seen here in the role that he assumed all the years that Rama was in exile. The kingly figure, at the extreme right, is possibly Vibhishana, crowned by Rama as the king of Lanka after Ravana's destruction and death. The second monkey figure, Hanuman apart, is possibly Sugriva, also devoted to Rama. The enormous crested bird with sharp teeth that we only see the head of at the bottom right of the painting could, in this context, be the great vulture king, Jatayu. But the other figures,—spaced from each other and all seated with folded hands in adoration of Rama—are difficult to identify; the demon figure, with its head and tail, the serpent wriggling its way in the middle at the bottom, the fairy clad in pink, with prominent wings attached to her shoulders, the other pricely figures with *sarpeshes* stuck in their turbans, the boyish, sage-like figures, are all truly difficult to place. The two birds above the heads of Rama and Bharata, and tufts of grass with wild flowers that dot the background, do not help to specify the locale: there is no architecture, no specific setting, that the painter provides us with. Only two spandrels at the top corners are brought in as features.

The congregration is unusual, for all the characters that one has tentatively identified do not fit into any particular event connected with the life of Rama. The winged Pari, very much a Kashmiri maiden but for her curiously shaped wings, wearing a flat skull cap, ornaments in the hair and around the ears, is an unusual introduction. It is just possible that the painter here is evoking the moment when Rama and Sita take their leave of the world, the Pari being a messenger from the heavens to which they are to ascend. Rama gives words of advice to Bharata, and in a collective evocation of the characters whose lives became intertwined with those of Rama and Sita, the painter brings in this assortment of persons. If this were so, the scene comes purely from within the painter, for no parallels to this are easy to find in Indian painting. Considering the thick, cardboard like *wasli* on which the painting is done, with pink borders, and narrow black margin with rough floral decoration on it, it is unlikely that the painting belongs to a series, or to an illustrated manuscript. It seems to be a single leaf that the painter took it into his mind to turn out.

The drawing is generally weak, the figures stiff, the painter almost unable to handle a group with ease, the standing maid at the extreme left bent awkwardly. In providing a muddy brown ground, the painter departs from his usual practice. The introduction of the head of the great bird, who could have wandered in here from a *Shahnama* page, considering how close it is to the Simurgh that appears in some illustrated manuscripts of Firdausi's work, starties with its palpable presence.

P. 46. THE CYCLE OF LIFE
Folio from an unidentified series of paintings
18 cm x 30 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

The work is possibly inspired by a Pahari painting with which it bears a similarity. This is especially seen in the large, glistening white area of architecture, the disposition of figures, especially in the chamber at right, the general appearance of the folio with its black margins and pink border. But it is difficult to think of an exact model: in the range of known Pahari paintings, this subject is not to be found. In fact, interpreting the content of the painting presents some difficulty.

What one sees is two chambers, occupying roughly the same kind of area on the page, but differently constructed. The painter wishes us to know that the chamber at the right is part of some kind of a palace structure, while the chamber at left perhaps is part of a temple, considering the domes with inverted lotus leaves as finials on the roof. The principal figure in the chamber at left, a man

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seated on what looks like a simple hexagonal coverlet—but perhaps meant to be deer-skin considering the shading along the rib in the middle—is that of an ashen bodied ascetic with matted locks tied in a bun at the top. He is seen expounding, the audience being a princely figure, seated with folded hands a little below the deer skin, looking up at the master. The chamber at the right has a divine figure, Rama possibly, seated on a throne, attended upon by a fair-skinned divine figure: the crowns worn by both need notice. Facing the seated figure on the throne is another blue-bodied figure, bare in the upper part of the body, clad only in a *dhoti* with a spotted pattern, his hair partially flowing and covering the back of the neck, and partially tied in a bun at the crown. The group that we see here possibly represents Rama on the throne, Lakshmana behind him, and Rama's younger brother Bharata, blue-complexioned like him, who is known to have spent several years of his life as a *tapasvi* during Rama's exile. But this can only remain a tentative identification, for there are no other iconographical hints to help establish the scene beyond doubt.

The most puzzling part of the painting, however, is in the middle, in the space between the two chambers where a brownish hill rises in a sharp curve towards the top. Here one sees six figures, ranging in age from an infant to an old man. No obvious connection is established between them, no conversation takes place, no event or incident can be read into the disposition of the six figures. There is the possibility, however, that what is shown here are different stages in the life of a man, from infancy to old age. One sees an infant at the bottom-left; a slightly older boy, perhaps an acolyte, next to him; the boy grown a little in years and seated at the extreme right next to him. In the centre one sees two men, looking fairly alike, but of different ages, the man at left being the younger of the two. Topping the group is an old man, grey bearded, long-haired, slightly bent, walking with the help of a rough staff; his body is bare but for a brief *dhoti*. On the forehead is a red *tilak*-mark, which appears on virtually every figure in this puzzling page.

One cannot rule out the possibility that what is visualised is the subject of the discourse being delivered, both in the chamber at left by the holy man to the Prince, and by Rama—if indeed it is Rama—to Bharata in the chamber at right. The course of human life, the meaning or lack of it, may be the subject. But this remains only a guess.

The general look of the page may be Pahari but in its details the work is distinctly Kashmiri, the drawing, the colours chosen for the dresses and the bolster, the summary treatment of details of architecture, the figuration employed, the prominent spotted patterning on the costume, all being strongly suggestive of this. One also notices the floral margin in patterns of white against black. Even though roughly handled, this is in simulation of finer Pahari margins on paintings, but comes in this case from a Kashmiri hand.

P. 47. CALLIGRAPHY IN *NASTALIQ*
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Ragamala*
25 cm x 18 cm
Coll. Shri Raghunath Library, Jammu
Unpublished.

The sumptuous, extremely finely illuminated folios that make up this fragment of what must once have been a precious volume, now bear the appearance of leaves from an album. There are several inconsistencies and features that puzzle in this work, but there is little doubt that the subject is the *Ragamala*. Several leaves simply contain paintings of well known *ragas* and *raginis*, in styles that vary from late Rajasthani to Deccani to Pahari, apparently with some Kashmiri input. There are other leaves which only have elaborate calligraphy and illumination, the text being extremely neatly written; on some leaves taken from a

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Hindi composition with a profuse admixture of Persian words, and, interestingly, an interlinear translation of the verses in Persian, written in *nastaliq* characters: the text is devoted to a devotional composition like a *bhajan* set in a given *raga* which explains the inclusion of the text in the *Ragamala* volume. There are notes on some illuminated borders, long, complex texts giving details of the *raga*, the time of its playing, the family to which it relates, even technical details such as the *svaras* used in it, the *aroha* and the *avaroha* etc.: all noted down in Persian, clearly taken from a Sanskrit or Hindi original and translated. The borders are very finely illuminated in gold with arabesque patterns, floral meanders, and figurative work featuring essentially birds and animals in high quality gold. On the paintings are inscribed names of the *ragas* or *raginis*, identifying them: thus, 'Bhaitravi', 'Kanhada', 'Maru', 'Malashri', etc.

On the one folio where the first of the *ragas*, Bhairava, is shown, the image is that of Shiva, five-headed, seated with Parvati under a tree. In white pigment on the face of the painting are written the words 'Bhairon and Bhairavi', also in black ink the words 'Shivji', 'Parvatiji' In addition the five heads of this Sadashiva form have tiny notations below them, again in *nastaliq* characters, giving 'names' to the various heads; 'Shree Raga', 'Basant', 'Panchama', 'Megha' and 'Nata Narayana'. The principal head is identified again as 'Bhairon'. The painting is very Pahari looking, but in the manner of showing the five-heads laterally, besides the ground which is a flat green marked by streaks of light grey in parallel strokes, it is possible to see some Kashmiri element in the work.

However, the clearest evidence of a Kashmiri connection comes from the present leaf which serves as the frontispiece of the album. Here, in a very fine hand in *nastaliq* characters in six lines written in white pigment is the text of a *bhajan* of Surdas. In the centre of the page—the lines of the text are evenly distributed, above and below it—is a *shamsa*, very finely illuminated even though simple in its conception, with the title and the date of the work at its heart, written in white pigment against a gold ground. The words here read: 'Ragamala' and then the date is given in three different calenders '1200' (clearly the Hijri year); 'Samvat 1930' (clearly the Vikrami year); and 'Sanna 1873', (the year of the Christian era). No doubt is thus left about the date of this manuscript. More information is provided in brief notes written in red pigment, of the kind that is used to identify key words in the text ordinarily written in white pigment in the form of bars above the words. The top 'caption' reads 'Raga Bhairon; *zubani* Surdas' (Raga Bhairava; in the words of Surdas); and, at the bottom on either side of the short line of the text in the middle, there are the important words: "baqalam, Pandit Raja Ram Kaul ma'ruf Tota" (In the hand of Pandit Raja Ram Kaul, alias Tota).

Raja Ram's name is not unknown for it figures in several manuscripts scripted in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century in the Panjab. He was a well-known scribe; the quality of writing on this page undoubtedly establishes that he was also a distinguished calligrapher.

The preciseness with which the writing has been done in white pigment makes one wonder if Raja Ram Kaul was also not a painter. That he came from Kashmir, and that the manuscript or album has a Kashmir connection, is beyond any doubt. Where the work was actually executed, or who commissioned it, may never be known.

P. 48. THE MARRIAGE OF KRISHNA AND RUKMINI
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagvata Purana*
21 cm x 14 cm
Coll: Braja Academy of Culture, Vrindavana
Published; NM Suzanova, *Surdas's Krishnayana*, Leipzig 1978, p.153.

The marriage of Krishna with Rukmini is here simply, perhaps over simply, rendered. All the tumult that preceded the 'abduction' of Rukmini by Krishna, the

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battle that ensued, the series of events that preceded and followed it, are left out. Here, with two priests presiding over the ceremony, the holy fire lit, Krishna simply sits, sword drawn and held aloft, Rukmini by his side, while the parents of Krishna, Vasudev, and Devaki, as the text says, stand behind, hands folded, adoring and blessing at the same time.

The text, a simple rendering of the *Bhagavata Purana* scripted here in Gurmukhi characters, speaks of the 'grandeur' of the event and the great celebrations that went with the wedding. But all of that is eschewed. There is nothing that one sees of architecture, canopies, the setting of the palace, the presence of family members, relatives and courtiers. In fact, Krishna and Rukmini do not find even the usual low seats for themselves to sit on while the marriage ceremony is in progress. It is all rendered in an abbreviated, simplified mode, with a folkish directness. The priests as would be appropriate sit on the floor; the fire, its spiky orange-coloured flames—here only five in number—is shown burning in a little receptacle; Krishna and Rukmini are seated on strangely shaped domical rocks, pink and grey, their legs dangling to suggest as if these are high perches; Vasudeva and Devaki stand at the back. The colour of the ground is a flat red; the background consists of three large flat areas, curving at the top, of green, dark-brown and orange with downward pointing triangles of pink and red filling the spaces between the curves. The horizon curves in a continuous line across the page, and towards the top a flat, even-coloured strip of blue defines the sky.

The utter simplicity of the rendering apart, one notices the freedom with which the painter treats the elements in the scene. Against the flat green and brown areas in the background are drawn, in white, ritual diagrams on the 'floor'; the more elaborate one at left with squares and projecting triangles and a snake-like shape, and the more simple one at right with six rectangles. The painter must have been familiar with ritual drawings used on marriage occasions, but greatly abbreviates them. That these drawings are not on the floor but in what he has defined as the space far in the background seems to be of no concern to the painter. The figure of Rukmini is completely clad, from head to feet, in a 'golden' ensemble of clothes. Nothing of her body or face is visible, hands and feet also wrapped in the same clothing. The suggestion really is of the bride being hidden from view, fully veiled. That this is not an unfinished part of the painting one is able to ascertain from another scene of a wedding, that of Balarama, in the same manuscript which has an identical composition; the bride in that painting is similarly clad and veiled.

The text in Gurmukhi characters appears above and below the painting, within the text panel, following the pattern adopted throughout this profusely illustrated manuscript. The work is not intended to be detailed or sumptuous, and one can imagine a patron commissioning a group of scribes or painters to turn out a relatively low-priced text for him to read from. It is this which would explain the complete absence of time-consuming incorporation of settings, architectural details, decoration of different kinds: the bringing in of those would have involved more time, greater care, and therefore greater costs.

P. 49. A WARRIOR SLAYS A TIGER
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of a Persian text
17 cm x 15 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

The text of the illustrated manuscript from which this isolated painting comes is not identifiable. All that one can speak of is a general resemblance the page bears to illustrated manuscripts of the *Shahnama* in respect of the manner in which the text is scripted: the four columns of the *masnavi* form. The hero whom we see here slaying the tiger, however, is certainly not Rustam, for none of the

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iconography of that warrior, as followed in texts of the *Shahnama*, is seen here. Prominently seen in the background is a young woman, one leg raised, with the knee folded and the other extended, wearing long, leather boots, a short jacket over a green dress, and a prominent *kulah*-cap with a *sarpesh* on the head. It is difficult to make out where she is seated but then one realises that the yellow, flapping curtain at the top is to be seen as belonging to an opening into a tent, the inside of which we are allowed to view. That is where the lady is seated, the purple-mauve, patterned textile in the background being the inside of the tent. Towards the left, at the back, a clearer statement is made by the painter about this being the scene of 'an encampment'.

A tall red cloth screen, with white dotted patterns on it, topped by a green band and stiffening provided at intervals by bamboo rods that go into the screen, appears in front. Behind it are sharp pyramidal points of tent roofs: violet, green, yellow, with a little indication of folds or wrinkles at the very top. Behind these, a blue surface stretches: that it is not the sky is suggested by the painter through a dotted pattern upon it, more like little tufts of grass of the kind that one finds on the grass expanse in the foreground. The scene is set at the edge of a water body, a lake with serrated edges, and sedge growing neatly along its bank. At extreme bottom-right a horse is partially seen, narrow head, long and massive neck, and a part of its saddle brought into the area of the painting.

The hero himself, occupying the centre of the painting, stands resolutely, body slightly bent forward, arm holding a curved sword with which he strikes the approaching tiger on its head, the contest between beast and man approaching its end. The tiger which comes in from the left of the painting, snarling and on the run, is now all but finished. The warrior, however, is still on the ready, shield held in the left hand, body and senses all alert. He is dressed in a *qaba* which is tucked, for easy action, at the waist, the long end of it covering his back; over it is a half-sleeved jacket of hip-length secured in the middle by a waist-band; a pair of breeches, long-leather boots, a turban with a *sarpesh* stuck in it, complete the dress.

The artist clearly wishes to bring in an element of surprise, and wonder, into the painting. The sudden leap of the tiger from the left, his body still not fully into the picture; the gesture of surprise on the maiden's part, all contribute to this design.

In its style the painting seems to go beyond the broad limits of the Kashmiri style and would fall into what Goetz designates as the 'Afghan-Kashmiri' style. The dress of the hero here, especially the manner of wearing the turban, and the upward curve of his moustache, together with the cut of his beard, suggest the north-western part of the Panjab or Afghanistan, for it is in that area that this type would most confortably fit. But, that apart, the manner of the treatment of space with the artist intent upon showing a sense of perspective, establishing planes differently than the usual run of Kashmiri artists would do, etc., and a certain sense of realism in the treatment of the two animals in the painting do point in that general direction. One also notices a kind of reddish-tint on the faces, some suggestion of modelling being brought in. On the other hand, all the colours that one associates with Kashmiri work are here, especially the favourite range of purples and violets and pinks. The arbitrary, 'illogical' manner in which figures—here, the figure of the maiden who is seen almost levitating in the air—provide a further link with Kashmir. The refusal of the artist to work everything out to its rational end is again marked. One notices this in the treatment of the tent in which the maiden is seated. It is not easy to make out what the two light-green areas on either side of the opening of the tent represent. If they are parts of the tent, and its outer aspect, it is not easy to determine where they would end towards the top for, unlike the other tents, nothing in these projects pyramidally to give them a shape, a structure of that order.

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P. 50. THE ANGEL GABRIEL RESCUES YUSUF
Folio from an illustrated manuscript of the *Yusuf-Zuleikha* of Jami
16.8 cm x 9.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 55.48
Unpublished.

In the dramatic episode that is depicted here, through divine intervention the angel Gabriel suddenly appears, swooping down from the heavens to rescue Yusuf who has been cast into the well. The text in Maulana Jami's work describes the incident at length, and speaks of the amulet tied on the arm of Yusuf, something that was of deep significance to his life and survival. The well is very inventively rendered, the painter combining two views of it; the one on top seen more or less from above; and the one below is presented as a 'section' of the inside of the well. A continuity is established between the two views of the well through the figure of the angel that is shown plunging into the well from the top, the lower part of his body shown upside down, feet spread, scarf fluttering, *qaba* swaying in the air, and the face, arms, and wings of the angel appearing through the section seen below. The wings are nearly all spread out in the lower part, the face fully visible and arms flung forward to catch Yusuf in the act of falling to the bottom of the well. The movement, the entire effect, is very skilfully rendered, the painter abandoning all thought of rendering the scene logically, only from one point of view, and settling for clarity and dramatic effect through this innovative device.

Surprised, Yusuf looks back and gazes into the angel's eyes even as he tries to steady himself by stretching his arm and balancing his body. Above, in the rocky surrounding is a group of men, the elder among them bending forward eagerly to watch this event. They are undoubtedly the brothers of Yusuf who had cast him into the well themselves. The men are all dressed in the same fashion, long *qabas* or *jama* coming down to below the knees, tight pyjamas, tall boots, and dull and heavy turbans that strongly suggest the types most commonly seen in the Afghan-Kashmiri types of painting. The faces are mostly clean-shaven, but for the moustaches which curl slightly upwards; a mass of black hair falls from under the turban and curls at the nape of the neck. The jamas and the turbans are all differently coloured; even when one does not see many faces, a densely organised group, with a great deal of overlapping and oversecting, is introduced by the painter. The faces are all slightly modelled and one sees in them a light tint of red, familiar from other manuscripts of this group, and derived possibly from the conventions used in late Mughal painting from the mid-eighteen century onwards. The landscape is shown prominently rocky, the salmon pink and violet colours filling most of the surface in the background upto the point where craggy edges stand out against a golden sky with stretches of red in it. In the background, little rocks with sprigs of grass sprouting around them are introduced to underscore the rocky nature of the landscape. There is no tree in sight, nor any water, except of course in the well into which Yusuf has been cast.

A surprising introduction, something that heightens the drama of the picture, is the sharp blue used by the painter to mark the inside of the well faced with brick-work. Rarely does one see this colour employed in this fashion. Somewhere in the colour of the green *qaba* of the angel, and especially the heavy modelling on the angel's face, there is a suggestion of influence of European work.

The painting seems to be unrelated to the mainstream of Kashmiri work. But it is of interest, like other folios in this manuscript, and in other works, to take notice of a style that entered the awareness of the Kashmiri painters as they moved about in Northern India, plying their trade and executing commissions. It is possible that, side by side with Kashmiri groups others were engaged in work of this kind, especially in the Panjab, and Uttar Pradesh. This manuscript has a fly-

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leaf that records its having been in the possession of 'Sanaa Ahmad, son of Shaikh Nasir Shah'. It mentions a Muslim holy seat in the town of Kunjpura in the district of Karnal (now in Haryana), and a date corresponding to the eighteenth of June, A.D. 1888.'

The colophon of this handsomely calligraphed volume mentions no date but the place where it was completed was 'the village of Mahim. It is in the hand of 'this humble mendicant, the lowly Pir Baksh, son of Mian Sahib, Hazrat Sodi-addi'.

P. 51. A PAPIER-MACHE PAINTER AT WORK
Folio from an album of drawings of professions
35.5 cm x 26 cm
India Office Library, London
Acc. No. Add. Or. 1703
Published: Brigid Keenan, *Travels in Kashmir.* Delhi 1981, fig. 35.

In the dated album from which this folio comes are a large number of renderings of craftsmen at work, the emphasis being not on the men working as much as on aspects of technique. In keeping with the scientific British interest in documenting all kinds of aspects of life in India, especially trades and professions and sects etc., extensive sets were got prepared by 'company' patrons in all parts of India. In this series many of the crafts of Kashmir are covered. There are pages dealing with carpet weavers, designers of furniture, paper makers and, as here, a painter on papier-mache. As a rule, in all these folios, the craftsmen are shown in the upper part of the page, and their tools, each singly laid out, and identified through a note, in the lower part. As far as Kashmir is concerned, these coloured drawings were prepared at a time when interest in trade of objects produced in Kashmir was at its height. The exhaustive inquiries of Moorcraft into the craft of shawl weaving in Kashmir belong exactly to this period. Other travellers, touring through Kashmir in one guise or the other, men like Vogel and Hugel and Jacquemont were each, in their own way, observing, documenting, making recommendations to their own states or employers.

The drawings in this series are all inscribed in Persian. The captions are explicit and specific; each object is clearly identified and shown from its most characteristic angle; nothing is left without a word of explanation. Because of the scientific interest in the subjects, and the strangeness both of objects and crafts, this seemed to be necessary. Evidently, it was a local group of artists who were engaged to turn this work out. It must have taken the person who commissioned this series much of explaining about the purpose of rendering things in this dry and explicit a manner, for work in this genre must have been completely beyond the ken of the normal artist working within the tradition of Kashmiri painting. But with his marked skill at adapting himself to different tasks, the painter set to work, producing in the process not distinguished works of art but simply a record. He was asked to turn everything inside out, and this is exactly what he did in these pages.

In the present leaf, the caption in Persian written in rough *nastaliq* script with an occasional admixture of *shikasta*, states that this is a painting showing the art of *naqqashi*. Along with this the tools used in naqqashi work have been described and the *naqqash* shown occupied in his craft. Under this caption, a man is shown wearing a long jama from under the loose sleeves of which a close fitting inner garment with tight sleeves is suggested, a shawl casually draped over the shoulders, and a full turban. The man is bearded and wears generally a Muslim look, which is wholly in consonance with the fact of papier-mache artists or *naqqashes* belonging to that faith. The *naqqash* is seated with one leg tucked under him, the other raised and bent at the knee on which his right hand lightly rests, holding the brush with which he paints on a circular object, presumably a

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box cover, which he holds steady with the left hand. In front of him, seen wholly from one side, is a large wooden chest, its lid propped open, revealing some boxes inside, and showing a lock on the outside. The clasp is seen dangling; this detail reveals exactly the kind of approach taken in this series of paintings by the artists. Nothing is left to the imagination, nothing is unstated. The box is identified through an inscription as *'sanduq barae asbab'* [chest for goods] and the little bowl with pigments close to the craftsmen's legs as a *'kasa-i rang'*, [bowl for colour].

In the lower half of the page a series of tools and implements are spread out and identified, each through a brief inscription in Persian. Among the objects are thick brushes (*kuchahai khurd wa kalan),* five brushes (*'qalam-ha'*), platter for pounding gold leaf (*'rakabi barae tila'*), sheaf of papers for storing gold leaf (*'kitab barae waraq-tila'*), bottle for storing oil, (*'shisha-i roghan'*), bowls for pigments, (*'kasa-i rangha'*), pen case for brushes, (*'kalamdan barae qalam ha'*), and so on. There are drawings of a compass, of a scraper, a pestle, a mortar, a trowel, a stone for grinding pigments, large pincers etc. Everything is laid out with extreme care, even if indifferently drawn and painted.

P. 52. VISHWARUPA: THE COSMIC FORM OF VISHNU
From an unidentified manuscript
52 cm x 54.4 cm
Acc. No. 59.155/1
Coll; National Museum, New Delhi
Published: P. Banerjee, *The Life of Krishna;* Daljit Khare, *Catalogue of Indian Paintings for the Festival of India in U.S.S.R.*

The great vision granted to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, for the removal of Arjuna's doubt and for establishing, as if for ever, approaches for gaining a true vision of the ultimate reality, is the theme: Vishnu assumes his Vishwarupa. The descriptions in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgita* are full of passion and of eloquence. The painter is faced with the challenge of rendering this great vision ever so often while illustrating the *Bhagavadgita* in Kashmir and elsewhere: the task for him must have been daunting.

Here, departing from the usual simplified and rather arbitrary way of rendering the Vishvarupa in the form of Vishnu seated, around his face images of deities of various kinds and other mortal beings all densely packed, the artist in this painting shows Vishnu-Krishna standing as a truly colossal form, legs slightly spread, as if to break out into a slow, cadenced dance, the forearms spread out, the world compacted in all its aspects into his great form. Countless deities can be seen rendered in various attitudes, and drawn from diverse sources, all painted in tiny form, and all spread and scattered over the shoulders, the chest, the stomach, the arms. At the very heart of the figure is a golden inverted triangle pointing downward and aiming straight at a ring of concentric circles, as if the levels of the earth are being hinted at. Against the white background of the garment that Krishna wears on the upper body, the sky in all its expanse, the tiny figures, blue, yellow, red, are all filled in and scattered. The same colour continues to the lower ends also, but around the delicately coloured, yellow gold *dhoti,* the loose end of which hangs beautifully against the red ground the 'Kalgha' patterns glisten. Krishna's form is shown in blue, which again stands out beaufitully against the flat lac-coloured ground and the white, and throws the yellow-gold of his dress into prominent relief. The artist brings in a lot of jewellery and ornamentation on the delicately painted crown with two *sarpeshes* sticking out and a central piece made up of a spreading arrangement of peacock feathers; large earrings dangle from Vishnu-Krishna's ears, adorned with pearls and precious stones; large wristlets decorate the forearms, and equally large anklets appear close to the feet.

The gentle, staring eyes, the full face rendered very sharply pointed towards the chin, are related to so many other Kashmiri works with the same figuration of

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the face; the nimbus behind Krishna's enormous head is in tear-drop shape, with a sharp point that cuts across the top border.

But nothing seems to have been made in a routine fashion: one sees this in the selection of the objects that the painter places in Vishnu-Krishna's four hands. Here, the *shankha*, the *chakra*, the *padma* apart, one sees, in the fourth hand, held aloft, a large, multi-headed serpent, held away from the body and spreading its heads downwards. In this, perhaps, the painter hints at the description by Krishna of himself as being the foremost of all sentient beings, like *shesha* among the serpents. The lotus as painted by the artist here is not of the routine kind, but the stem from which it dangles, head downwards, forms a beautiful object with curling leaves. The hands 'hold' the objects convincingly, as different from the usual summary representations in which the objects simply rest on lightly clenched fists.

There is, thus, much delicacy and grandeur that one sees in this rendering. A sense of conviction seems to inform the image, making it one of the most impressive of Vishvarupa images in Indian painting. Flanking the form of Vishnu-Krishna are two figures, the one at left undoubtedly of Arjuna, his fallen bow and sword close to his feet, body dressed in helmet and other garments, ready for battle, hands joined. The surprise, however, is the figure seen at extreme right, shown considerably smaller than Arjuna, but in the same attitude of adoration and prayer. The priestly Sikh looking figure, dressed very simply in white is identified as 'Sodhi Bhan Singh'. He is, undoubtedly, the patron for whom this very impressive series of paintings, now detached from a manuscript to which they must have belonged, was painted, for he appears also in another leaf, seated at prayer, invoking Mahakali and Mahakala. The Sodhi seems to have been a serious patron, commissioning illustrated works, for one knows a manuscript of the *Gurbilas*, mentioning his name as a patron, and now in the Academy of Sciences at Leningrad in the U.S.S.R. That manuscript is dated A.D. 1838.

P. 53. A PATTERN FOR A HAND FAN
19 cm x 27.5 cm
Private collection
Unpublished.

Among the articles of furniture, and of daily use, which were elaborately painted with delicate designs, was undoubtedly the hand-fan. This design, obviously prepared and kept as a model, has the shape of the blade of an Indian-axe, the *parashu*. To the top horizontal bar, a rod/stick would be attached with the help of which the fan would be moved to air oneself. But, instead of this being a simple fan made of rush-matting or straw it must have been made of thin papier-mache board or a board prepared from a mixture of cloth, clay and paper, stiff on the one hand and a little pliable on the other. It would seem as if a Kashmiri hand was responsible for the design seen here. It has been drawn in pencil, the outline of the shape being marked by a broad, even border with a pattern of flowers and a creeper; the body is filled with intricate floral patterns, different from but not unrelated to what one sees along the borders. The under drawing is done in lead pencil, but there is a firming up of the design with the brush. There is no indication of colours.

In the centre of the fan is placed a drawing of Shiva seated on a tiger skin: one knee raised, the other leg folded under him, one hand resting on the ground, the other on the raised knee and brought against the chest, holding a small *akshamala*. Other details of iconography can be discerned; the long brief loin cloth, a garland of heads, snake around the neck, Ganga proceeding from the locks and falling in a curve behind him. The figure is conceived within a nimbus as the sun with pointed rays emanating from it. This figure may well have been drawn also by a Kashmiri artist although there could be some doubt in this. The area where the figure is placed is primed in white as if readied for painting. This

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in itself is inexplicable for the rest of it only remains a design to be copied on hand-fans. But then one notices that this drawing has been done on a different piece of paper, then cut along its outline, and pasted onto this hand fan. However, it is after the collaging of this figure on the sheet that some petals and stems belonging to the basic design are brought into the sheet, as if to integrate fully into the total design as conceived by the designer and the painter.

P. 54. A SACRED DESIGN
25 cm x 21 cm
Coll. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares
Unpublished.

The drawing is simple: a representation of the scene of the churning of the ocean which illustrates, as usual, the second or the *Kurma avatara* of Vishnu. But the owner of this folio or the painter himself has turned it into a 'sacred' object by covering the whole page with the lone word 'Rama' in Sharada script, written in tiny characters, in column after vertical column in black or red ink. No other word is used; this word fills every available space except for the figures of the demons, the mountain used as a churning rod, placed on the massive back of the form of *Kurma*. The other objects left unfilled with the sacred name of Rama are the lotuses in the water body, which notionally occupies the lower half of the page. On the borders, on both sides, again, the word Rama is written in square *chausar*-like patterns.

What the significance of all this is, whether the word 'Rama' is repeated a thousand times on this page as a virtuoso exercise, is not clear. Nor is it possible to make out why the writer/designer shifts from black into red. Whether the consideration simply is to retain a memory of different coloured backgrounds in different parts of the page. one would never be able to know. That there is some deeper meaning to the whole thing is all that one can guess at.

Of obvious interest is the drawing itself, considering that so few drawings from Kashmir seem to have survived. The brush work, one notices, is thick; only rough outlines of figures have been drawn or suggested. It is as if only a design, *naqsh,* is being worked out on the page. Even though the character of the line seen generally in Kashmiri painting is not of a very high order, lines this thick are seldom to be seen. We can only conclude therefore that what we have here is a rough working out of a composition, much like a *namoona* in Pahari painting. Within these constraints, however, the painter is very specific in iconographic details. The bird-feet of the demons appearing at the right, close to the mouth of the great Vasuki serpent, are easy to make out; towards the left, on the tail-side of the churning serpent-rope, only two deities are introduced: Vishnu in front, wearing a *mukuta*-crown and Shiva behind him. Shiva's third-eye, and an uneven garment worn around his loins suggesting an unusual skin, like the stream of the Ganga emerging from his malted locks, establishes his identity, even if little else is discernible, and the locks in this simplified rendering look like a skull cap.

Of interest is the form of *Kurma,* as awkwardly treated as in virtually all Kashmiri paintings dealing with this theme. It seems as if the painter was unfamiliar with the tortoise and brought in, almost at will, some kind of a reptilian creature, more a composite than an identifiable animal, with a fish-like tail as here, alligator-like legs and body, a head with ears.

The character of the drawing and this morphology of the tortoise, like the Sharada script on the page, places this leaf clearly in Kashmir. This attribution to Kashmir is of some importance for, with its help, one is able to place some drawings in the Boston Museum, published earlier by Coomaraswamy, which are similarly concieved, with the page virtually all filled with a repeated, sacred word. One of those drawings may even belong to this series, for it shows the Buddha who often represents the ninth *avatara* of Vishnu in a ten-*avatara* series.

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P. 55. SACRED SIGNS
9.5 cm x 15 cm
Private Collection
Unpublished.

This small, unpretentious sheet, packed with signs and symbols, is possibly a leaf from a sketch-book belonging to a priest. On it, not in any given order, are coloured drawings of the kind that would be needed on ritual occasions on the walls, the floor, or inside a book; motifs and symbols that would be needed for accurately rendering the iconography and *ayudhas* of various deities. In the centre of the page, occupying the largest amount of space, is a large square split into nine small squares, topped by an arch from the uppermost part of which some rays seem to emanate. Within these small squares are the nine *grahas* symbolically or aniconically represented.

In the top register is a triangle, representing the planet *Budha*; next to it at right is a rectangle symbolising *Shukra*; at the extreme right a lotus flower standing for *Chandra*. In the next line are an inverted triangle for *Guru*, a filled up red-lotus for Surya; a rectangle with circular projections at the four corners for *Mangala*. In the lowest register there is a small figure standing for *Ketu*; two forms stand for *Shani*; and a frontal severed head stands for *Rahu*. In the space between the large square and the arch above it is a sign of *vajra*, looking a little different from the usual *vajras* seen in Indian sculpture and painting, but clearly identified, like everything else on this page, through a brief inscription in Devanagari. The page is torn at the bottom right but, in the portions that have survived, there is a large lotus flower in mauve and pink, identified by the inscription simply as '*padma*'; a serpent with many heads, the '*sheshanaga*'; a vertical object with circular projections at either end and another circular projection towards the right, identified as '*Agastha*' (Agastya?). The other objects are *Om*, identified as '*Omkar*'; a spiral standing for '*Vishnu chakra*'; and a wavy stick-like object identified as '*pasha*' or noose. At the extreme left are other objects and signs: a vessel, '*kalash-kumbha*'; a *swastika* sign, described as 'Ganesha'; two trident forms, one of them inscribed as 'a trishula'; another small lotus; a rectangle consisting of nine smaller rectangles with a bird perched atop identified as '*navagraha*'. A flag shown at an angle is described as a '*vayavedhwaja*' (flag fluttering in the air?); a rectangle with sixteen small rectangles, inscribed as '*shodasha matra*' (the sixteen mothers?), and, finally, another red lotus, with a straight stem attached to it, unidentified through an inscription.

This repertoire of motifs, signs and symbols is comparatively roughly executed, but the intention of the artist seems to have only been to keep a record of these, as some kind of a reference sheet for use. At places the drawing is rather rough, the colouring imprecise; but one is in no doubt at all that the leaf originates from Kashmir considering the range of colours used by the artist, the figuration of the various objects, and the frontal face of *Rahu* which has a characteristic Kashmiri treatment. It is of interest to see that the 'swastika' sign, referred to as Ganesh in popular parlance and in the inscription, is drawn for 'left-handed' worship. Of interest also is the fact that the artist distinguishes between the five different kinds of lotuses that he brings in here. The size, the colours used, perhaps even the manner in which the petals are pointed, must stand in the artist's mind for different things, all to be employed differently on different occasions. That all these signs together do not belong to one object, like Vishnu's sacred feet, or are meant only for one ritual, is almost certain. Their range is too diverse, and the order in them completely lacking, for this to be so. There is thus good reason to believe that this is a leaf from a painter's sketch-book, containing mental and visual notes that he has made for himself.

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P. 56. SHIVA AND PARVATI IN THE WORLD LOTUS
12.5 cm x 17 cm
Private collection
Unpublished.

In the centre of the painting occupying nearly three-fourths of the entire surface is an enormous lotus, like a sphere that is suspended in the air, all petals, large and small, pointing downwards, successive 'layers' of these superimposed upon the one below. At the very bottom of this is a differently coloured arrangement of petals, as if it belonged to a different lotus altogether, into which everything gathers and ends. In the heart of this expanded, spherical lotus, on a leopard skin, sits Shiva, 'four-armed', with the goddess, his consort, painted much smaller than him in scale, in his lap, her right arm draped around his right shoulder, covering his back. Shiva, fair-complexioned, stark white in fact, has nothing in his four hands which are stretched out, except the left front one which is brought and placed against the chest and holds a folio of a manuscript on which some pseudo-Sharada characters are written. Behind him, as is usual, is a large, unornamented bolster. The divine pair is shown with a crescent, painted large and expansive, below them, covering the width of Shiva's body from bent knee to bent knee as he sits cross-legged on the leopard skin. The ground of the lower part of the picture is now a muddy-grey and might possibly have been silverish when first painted. Above this is a large expanse, mostly covered by the central, spherical lotus form, painted in green with spots against it; above it, a band of bluish grey, the sky, with white waterless wavy clouds in horizontal stripes shown in it. A narrow margin of white spots and stripes against the dark blue ground encloses the central image; around this, in miniature fashion, is a broad border of dark red with a double rule.

There is a marked feeling of roughness about the work, the application of colours, the drawing, the rules around the picture all adding to this somewhat coarse effect. The images of Shiva and his consort are particularly summarily drawn, and even though there is a slight bit of shading on Shiva's face, the figure is nowhere near the quite delicate effects that the painters were able to achieve when rendering the face frontally. Parvati's form is once again disproportionate, the head being too large, like the invisible part of he right arm that is draped around Shiva's shoulder. At same points, the world lotus appears stained. Simple water drops that might have accidentally fallen on to the painting have succeeded in making the colours run. But, for all this, the image is difficult to put out of one's mind. Not only because it is unusual, but because it seems to say something different from other images of Shiva and Parvati. In a startling, imaginative fashion the painter connects the top of the great spherical lotus form with its very bottom with a looping, curving line that follows the outer contour of the lotus at the right. Almost certainly, through this he is referring to the stream of the river Ganga that emerges from Shiva's matted looks, not graphically shown here but to 'be taken as implied', and takes that stream down turning it into the stem of the world lotus, feeding it, sustaining it. A circular, unending connection is thus made, the powers that sustain and nourish the universe being traced to their source in this fashion perhaps. It would appear as if the idea had suddenly struck the painter who, uninhibited by ideas of previously established iconography, or the approved way of doing things, comes up with a visual statement that is at once innovative and elevating. That other spheres are being referred to, that this is the world beyond perception, something that can be seen and realised only when the thousand petalled lotus opens within the meditator's mind, the *sahasrara-chakra*, is activated, is more than likely. Perhaps other thoughts might also have coursed through the painter's mind as he produced this image, coarseness and all.

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P. 57. VARAHA, THE THIRD INCARNATION
20.5 cm x 13 cm
Research Library of Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar
Unpublished.

The painter, Devi Bhagat, who in other folios of the same series describes himself also as 'Devi Koul Kashmiri', renders here the triumphal moment of the titanic struggle between Vishnu as Varaha, the primeval boar, and the demon Hiranyaksha who had subdued and taken the Earth into the depths of the waters. After fighting and conquering him, Varaha finally emerges from the waters, the Earth raised on his great tusks, safe for mankind to live on again.

As he renders it, Devi Bhagat shows the Varaha with all the attributes of Vishnu, blue complexion, yellow garments, four arms, carrying the sacred objects, *shankha, chakra, gada,* and *padma,* save for the head which is that of an animal: a boar. He stands astride the prostrate figure of Hiranyaksha shown horned with a tail that lies limply by his side. The Earth, saved and brought out of the waters by Varaha, consists of a stylised range of rocks in the painter's favourite purple and mauve arrangements; in their midst stands a cow, the Earth as 'Go', some stylised trees, a large structure and a few reptilian figures. The intention clearly is to signify that the Earth is marked by vegetation, man-made structures, mountains, animals of different kinds.

There is no narrative element in the painting, for if one takes the whole series of the ten *avataras* as a whole, the painter sets out to depict what could be called the most characteristic or climactic moments of the struggle against the forces of evil in which Vishnu was involved in one form or the other as an *avatara*: thus, the bringing down of Sahasrabahu by Parashurama, the tearing up of the belly of Hiranyakashipu by Narasimha, the triumph of Rama over Ravana, are all summarized in this series, condensed, as is usual.

The leaf is not a part of an illustrated manuscript, the ten paintings constituting this set apparently having been conceived by Devi Bhagat as 'single' miniatures, complete with a reddish border and a green and yellow margin at the edges. The themes, and the treatment, that we see in this series is not new or different. Devi Bhagat displays his skill in another way, by treating the whole leaf, more or less as a paper cut, the entire background of the page being filled with delicately cut designs of flowers and stems. With them he intermingles his own name and the date of the work at the bottom of the page. No other works of this category from Kashmir seem to have survived, lending this series a particular interest. The painter seems to have first proceeded to complete the painting on a sheet, and then started cutting the background out, in this delicate, tracing kind of pattern, leaving the painted figures and objects intact. It must have been painstaking work, considering the kind of tools that must have been available to Devi Bhagat. It is a virtuoso, dedicated, craftsman-like performance.

The quality of the painting, at the same time, is competent, the figuration, the laying of the colours, delicate. In leaving the background in its natural colour that is a very light brown, the painter allows the bright, glistening colours he uses—mauves, pinks, purples, yellows and blues—to stand out prominently against it.

P. 58. SHRI: A SACRED MOTIF
Hand painted, hand printed block
24.5 cm x 21 cm.
Coll. Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh
Acc No. 2192
Unpublished.

On a brittle, machine-made sheet of paper, appears, within double rules, simply

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the imprinted word, 'Shri', in Devnagari characters. The outline of the word, like the surrounding rules, is also printed, but the design inside is clearly hand-painted. The entire body of the word is filled with full-blown, open-petalled flowers, nearly all of them with eight petals but differently coloured and in different sizes, depending upon the space available. The dominant colours of the flowers are orange with a light violet, with an orange centre. Around the large-sized flowers are eight leaves, serrated and deeply veined. Around the small flowers, considering the small amount of space available, the leaves that spread out are fewer. Interspersed, and filling the spaces left, against the light moss green background are little stems and among them figures of butterflies, wings spread, delicate bodies exposed. The motifs, the colours, the entire arrangement of the decorative filling of the 'word', are very close to the patterns and the colours that one sees on papier-mache work. Almost certainly, a painter working in the papier-mache tradition, painting boxes, pencases, bangle-cases and the like, may have been responsible for this decorative work.

The sheet is obviously meant for display on a wall, either stuck on the wall by itself, or framed, the word invoking prosperity, wealth etc. being considered auspicious. Much in the manner of finely calligraphed *qitas* in Arabic or Persian, or simply the name of God, as was common in households at the end of the last century, 'Shri' seems to be the 'Hindu' counterpart of those non-figurative but wholly decorative designs that were rooted in the Islamic tradition.

The workmanship appears precise and attractive. The combination of printing technique and hand painting, something that must have been difficult for Kashmiri craftsmen to completely abandon after the arrival of the printing press, is of interest. The printing and painting of single words such as the present one seems to have been an innovation and put to good use the new techniques that had become available towards the end of the century.

P. 59. THE GODDESS ENTHRONED
Colour lithograph on paper
14.5 cm x 11.5 cm
Private collection
Unpublished.

The *tipras* or *janampatris*, horoscope scrolls, which were prepared for nearly all children born in Hindu families in Kashmir, almost always carried, at the top, a series of images of various deities, those that were 'personal' to the family concerned being given greater prominence. The deities apart, the images of the planetary deities were also given in them. The lower part of the scroll contained the usual astrological diagrams and calculations, gave details of the time, day, date, year of birth, and proceeded to lay down the various steps that needed to be taken, observances to be made for avoiding the ill-effect of planetary movements upon a child and his life. As a matter of routine the pandit who prepared the scroll himself drew and painted the images in the *tipra* even as he wrote it. With time, however, when means became available for reproducing standard, iconic images, the painted pictures went out of fashion and coloured lithographs of the kind that is represented by this image, came into vogue. Life went out of the *tipras* with this, but a certain convenience did result for the priests.

The image here is evidently part of a scroll, or a set. These could be bought at very low prices and stuck on the *tipras*. Some of them carry on the lower border even the name and address of the publishing concern which supplied these images, names like: 'Vishwanath and Sons' followed by the business address of the company concerned. There is little doubt that commerce was speedily replacing creativity.

This image is remarkably close to that showing a family shrine with the

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Goddess and Shiva enthroned in the Chandigarh Museum (See P. 20 *supra*). Exactly in the same fashion the goddess is seated on an octagonal throne, four-armed, carrying in her hands a lotus, a cup and a vessel. What is very noticeable is the manner in which the naked sword held in the front right hand of the Goddess is held at an angle and goes behind her head, its point showing on the other side across the nimbus. The bolster behind the Goddess, the lotus on which she sits crossed-legged, the *chhatra* with a curving stem above her, are all strongly reminiscent of that image. What is added, of course, is the detail of the Goddess' *vahana:* a leopard, instead of the usual tiger, crouching recumbent under the throne. This is a departure from the manner in which the tigers are generally shown; but in images of other goddesses, also produced in the same technique and for the same purpose, the tigers look suitably menacing.

The image is placed under a scalloped, pointed arch which has a prominent finial at the top. Behind the head of the Goddess, the green flat area features little spots; in some paintings these are made of gold or silver, but here they are made in black. The workmanship is very rough. The registration being poor, the colouring of the image is askew, but the drawing is highly competent, special attention having gone, unlike in many Kashmiri paintings, to the articulation of the fingers of the hand. The full face of the Goddess, the third eye, vertically half-opened on her forehead, is delicate in its own way, gentle and kind, taking attention away from the serpent curled around her neck.

At the top, the two buds which show over the scalloped arch and flank the central floral finial, suggest that this image may have been the one to be placed at the very top, the deity being the first one to be invoked. Other similarly coloured lithograph panels may not be the same.

P. 60. A RITUAL BLOCK PRINT
71 cm x 87 cm
Chandigarh Musuem, Chandigarh
Acc. No. 4959 (c)
Unpublished.

This large block print, combining the two techniques of colour lithography and what could be called wood-block printing, comes at the very end of the tradition of painting in Kashmir. Printed on a large sheet of machine-made paper, surrounded by narrow dark pink borders, in imitation obviously of borders for miniature paintings, the elaborate, complex design of this sheet obscures to an extent its function. Almost certainly, it was meant to accompany some ritual, and was used as a substitute for painting on the wall with its sacred circle showing the *rasalila* of Krishna and the Gopis, with six lines in Sharada script invoking various deities.

In the central, horizontal rectangle around the circle in the middle are images of deities. Starting from the top right, Ganesh seated on a lotus with his mouse-*vahana*; Durga on her tiger, nimbate and holding a lotus and other objects in her four hands; Saraswati flying away on her peacock-*vahana*, holding an open book in her hand, and a *veena* in her lap; and Shiva and Parvati seated on a lotus, with their *vahanas,* the Nandi-bull and a tiger seen in close proximity. The background colour of this spectacle is an uneven orange. Around this are two borders, the first in mauve with a diamond pattern with stars at the centre, and the outer one in red, with stylised fan-petalled flowers and geometric patterns. Around these two rectangular borders is a figurative border of great fascination for the range of motifs it incorporates. At the four corners are the figures of elephants with *howdahs* atop them and a *mahavat* in front, but no rider. At left, interspresed with long bean-pod like decorations and semi-circles are figures of three women, one of them reading, the other on a spinning wheel, and the third embroidering. A mythical animal with a long tail, painted in a deep pink also

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appears here. These figures can be seen the right side up only if the whole sheet is moved. On the top the motifs included in a sequence are of archers shooting arrows, a cow pounced upon and brought down by a mythical tiger-like animal, and a hunter felled by a lion. On the right border, curiously, is a representation of what seems to be Laila on a low throne, a camel tied at the side, and an emaciated figure approaching her; also shown is a fight between two figures, one of them with a tail about to overpower the other. At the bottom panel, three soldiers on horseback advance, swords drawn and ready; a very British-looking lion stares, recumbent, at another pair of figures with long tails wrestling. Interspersed, as noticed before, are decorative long wheel-like objects printed in red with figurative work. There are two more borders, one of them with floral work painted in red and the other in geometric star-like shapes painted in grey.

What function this block-printed and lithographed sheet had served is a matter for guessing. It must almost certainly have, however, belonged to the category of objects, not only in Kashmir but all over India, that replaced ritual paintings on the wall done at the time of weddings, religious festivals and observances.

That the sheet goes beyond the immediate need of ritual is quite clear, considering the number of mixed motifs that appear on the figurative border around the centre. It is almost as if the painter/printer/designer were here putting together, as on a wall, nearly the whole repertoire of motifs and themes that were within his range. Clearly, the sheet belongs to a late date, perhaps c. 1925. There are European influences to be seen in the choice of motifs, apart of course from the technique that is used here. The heart of the design is very traditional, with the scene of the *Rasa-lila* and the deities at the four corners. But the range of motifs in the outer, figurative border is an entirely different matter.

The work is festive looking, cheerful, innovative. The drawing is competent even though the registration, and the impress, are not of the best. The three figures of women at their daily activities are especially well-drawn, two of them in three quarters and the third in profile. There is an ease in their rendering which is quite unusual. Likewise the panel with Laila and Majnu, obviously an odd choice for a ritualistic sheet of this kind, is also very well drawn; so are the horses. The bearded, heavy-maned lion is modelled upon an image taken from a British painting or photograph. The colours even at this stage, when painting has drawn virtually to a close, are strongly reminiscent of earlier Kashmiri work, oranges, purples, mauves and pinks dominating.

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Karuna Goswamy, Professor at the Panja
University, Chandigarh, is an historia
whose work is distinguished by the use o
materials and sources too often ignored b
others. Gaining an understanding of the socia
impulses that the art of any given perio
mirrors, and using art as primary evidence
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